19 REVIEWS!
Rainbow Six • WarGames
Deathtrap Dungeon
Cyberstorm 2 • MK4
Urban Assault
...and many more!

21 STRATEGY PAGES!
Expert hints and tips for Descent: Freespace, Mech Commander, Unreal, and more!

6 FIRST-LOOKS!
In-depth previews for:
Heroes of Might & Magic III
Homeworld • Redguard
Trespasser • Shogo
Alien vs. Predator

PC GAMER

The World's Best-Selling PC Games Magazine

CD-ROM Edition

ON THE CD

Play the hottest shooter to arrive since Quake... Sin

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THE 50 BEST GAMES EVER!

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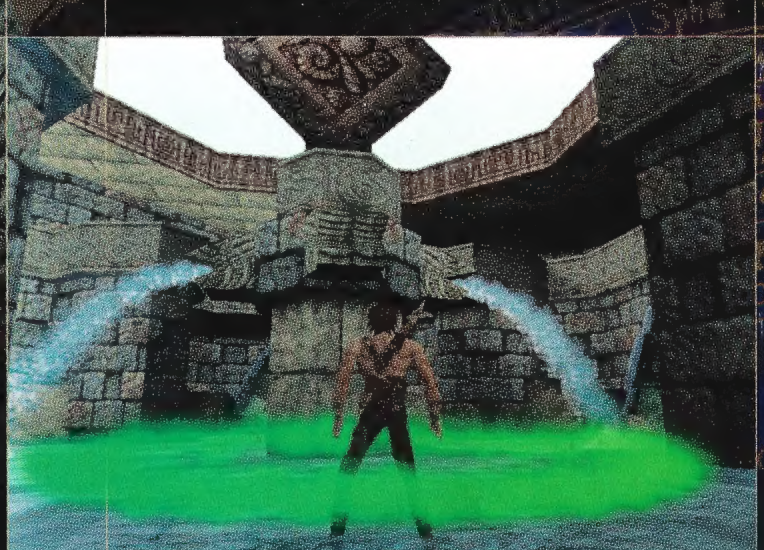

Heretic Meets Third Person
You never knew it could be like this. Surrender to insanely fast-paced action from a frighteningly immersive third-person perspective. Cooperative/deathmatch multiplayer has never seemed so real.

The Beauty of the Heretic Universe
Famed developer, Raven, does what it does best: beautifully rich gameplay. Battle through a 3-D continent of sinking cities and underground civilizations that are, in one word: legendary.

You're about to experience a
Powerfully intense action. Divine 3-D
And awe-inspiring third-person gam

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FOR THE
COMING

Revolutionary Quake®-Powered Action
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Superior Character Capabilities
As Corvus, Sidhe warrior from Heretic, wield magical powers, cast spells, unleash animated weapons and perform instinctive moves, such as unprecedented climbing, gymnastic and acrobatic maneuvers.

eretic revelation like no other.
worlds. Almighty weapons and spells.
play: a true out-of-body experience.

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PC GAMER
VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 10 • OCTOBER 1998

the 50 best games ever

Cover Story 86

Sorting through every PC game ever released and picking the best 50 of the bunch is no easy task, but once again we've done it. The result is the definitive listing of the finest games you could ever hope to play.

GENERATION Next

179

Some of the hottest upcoming games are coming from ambitious start-up companies. We went behind the scenes to find out what makes these gaming mavericks tick.

Features

MONOLITH 157
PLANET MOON 146
RELIC 152
REMEDY 140

Cavedog

A GAMER'S BEST FRIEND

166

Building on its smash real-time strategy hit, *Total Annihilation*, Cavedog is ready to branch out and show the world it's more than a one-hit wonder.

Shogo 38

Monolith's latest is a combination of Japanese animation and hot first-person shooting — how can it go wrong?

Homeworld 44

It's in space, it's in 3D... real-time strategy has never looked this good. From newcomers Relic Entertainment.

Scoops

Redguard 48

Bethesda's latest game takes place in the world of *Daggerfall*, and promises plenty to keep fans of the series happy.

Trespasser 54

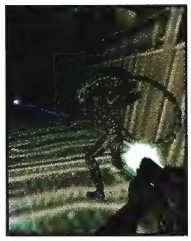
Take on the DNA denizens of *The Lost World* in this beautiful first-person adventure from DreamWorks.

Heroes of Might & Magic III 58

The world's most popular turn-based strategy game is back for another round.

Aliens Vs. Predator 62

Three distinct gameplay experiences are on offer in Fox Interactive's impressive-looking actioner.



Hardware

249 The Hard Stuff

The folks at Microsoft are at it again, and we'll let you know if Windows 98 is worth getting instead of two or three new games. We also put the latest video cards and other peripherals through their paces.

Reviews

209a Bio Freaks
232 Cyberstorm 2: Corporate Wars
238 Deathtrap Dungeon
236 Extreme Tactics
210 Flesh Feast
215 Get Medieval
220 JetFighter: Full Burn
208 Kuba
224 Mortal Kombat 4
203 Motorhead
225a NAM
216 Rampage: World Tour
208 Revenge of Arcade
228 Team Apache
241 TOCA Championship Racing
198 Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six
192 Urban Assault
194 Vangers
204 WarGames

Disc Pages

That shiny disc is calling you... can't you hear it? If you get stuck while playing our demos, we can help.

Strategy

304 **Descent: Freespace:** All you need to know to rule the galaxy.

316 **Unreal:** We've got super walk-throughs for 21 tough levels.

340 **Mech Commander:** The first campaign from your friends at FASA.

346 **Readers' Requests:** *Final Fantasy VII* tips and *GTA* cheats.

Departments

70 **Eyewitness**
A roundup of upcoming golf titles, new games from Acclaim, and a host of other stories from the wild world of PC gaming.

284 **Extended Play** — T. Liam McDonald
The re-re-re-release of LucasArts' X-Wing series, a new add-on for *Deer Hunter* (oh, joy!), and the latest on *The Operational Art of War* are Tom's subjects of the month.

289 **Multi-Play** — Jason Bates
Starsiege Tribes has been dominating Jason's online play all month.

290 **The Threshold** — Dennis Fong, a.k.a. "Thresh"
Thresh actually dragged himself away from *Quake* this month and is now wallowing in *SiN*.

295 **Alternate Lives** — Michael Wolf
What's your idea of the perfect role-playing game? Wolf fills you in on what he would like to see from the genre's next generation.

296 **The Desktop General** — William R. Trotter
The Colonel's had a brush with the way-back machine after doing some house-cleaning — and he's enjoying it quite a bit.

298 **Sim Column** — Dan Bennett
Dan talks with the guys at Terminal Reality about its upcoming civilian flight sim, *Fly!*

350 **Letters**
Put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and write us!

360 **Next Issue**
Did someone say *Quake III*? Yes, we'll have the full scoop on the year's most anticipated title. Plus, more gaming goodness than most humans can handle!

Why Do We Do it to Ourselves?

There are always plenty of uncertainties surrounding our compilation and publication of the *PC Gamer* 50 Best Games Ever listing, but one thing about it can certainly be relied upon — it'll provoke more reader mail than anything else we do here.

This is the third time in *PC Gamer*'s history that we've published such a list, and I've no doubt that this year's countdown will be every bit as controversial as the previous two have been. Inevitably, of course, not everyone will agree with what we've chosen, and what we've omitted. Many will think that we've gone completely off our rockers.

Of course, we haven't. No list could ever appease everybody — but then it'd be a pretty boring world if we all thought the same thing. These are *our* picks, but we wouldn't dare publish them without giving you your right to reply — the official ballot for voting in our upcoming Readers' All-Time Top 50 is included in this issue.

Some people may wonder why older classics like *M.U.L.E.*, *Gunship*, *Ultima I*, and *Wasteland* didn't make this supposed "all-time" list. The reason? Well, this is supposed to be a *practical* list, doubling as a guide to the best games you can play on your PC. The games mentioned above (and many more like them) are all classics, and we wouldn't dare play down their significance in the annals of PC gaming history, but they're now so old and antiquated that it's hard to extract much fun out of them any more. There are plenty of older games in our Top 50, but these are the ones that have stood the test of time and that, despite being a little frayed around the edges, are still just as much fun to play as any modern title you'd care to name.

So there you have it. Feel free to write, E-mail, vote... do whatever you will to lend support to, or criticize, our choices. We can't wait to hear what you think....

Gary Whitta, Editor-in-Chief

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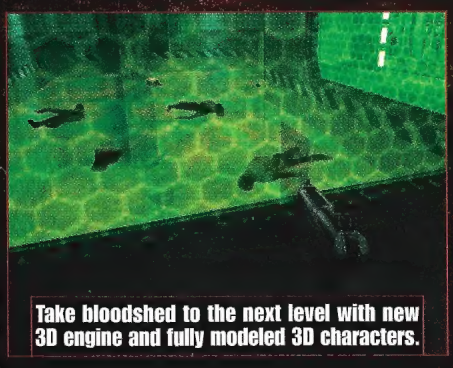
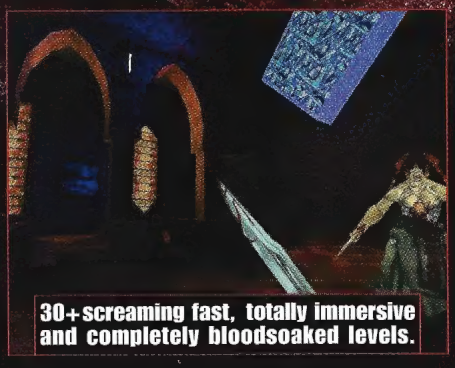


Take bloodshed to the next level with new 3D engine and fully modeled 3D characters.



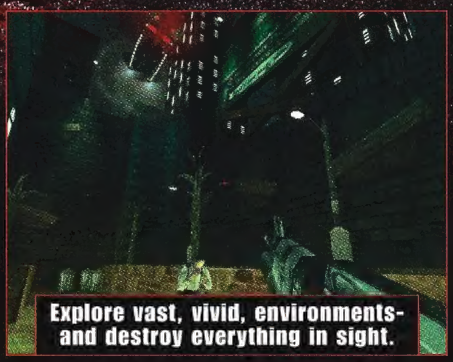
30+screaming fast, totally immersive and completely bloodsoaked levels.

Run a savage gauntlet of multiplayer mayhem from Teamplay to Level Racing.

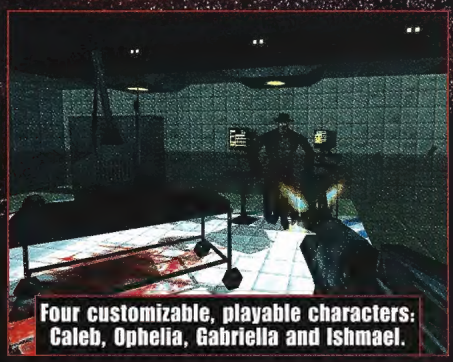
...and the seas became as BLOOD.

THE blood II CHOSEN

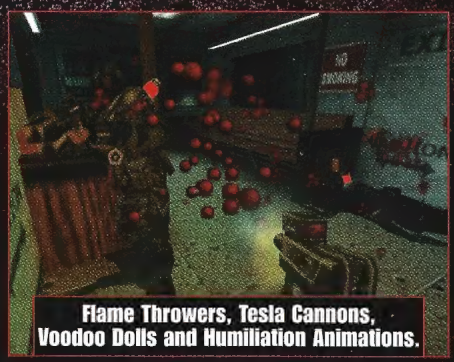
the second cut is the deepest



Explore vast, vivid, environments- and destroy everything in sight.



Four customizable, playable characters: Caleb, Ophelia, Gabriella and Ishmael.



Flame Throwers, Tesla Cannons, Voodoo Dolls and Humiliation Animations.

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A NEW EVIL HAS RISEN.
A NEW QUEST HAS BEGUN.
RAYMOND E. FEIST'S
Return to Krondor™
THE OFFICIAL SEQUEL TO THE BEST SELLING RPG OF ALL TIME.

Can CM Save Dry Gulch?

It began with the heat — it hit Dry Gulch like a sledgehammer, making it impossible for the prospectors to work. Animals from the surrounding areas began to crack from the hot weather, wandering into town and attacking anyone and anything. Thefts began to occur in the mines, and folks would go missing. One minute they were there, and the next they were gone.

And then the strangers showed up. Sure, they looked like everyone else, but there was something about them that wasn't quite right. And then the sheriff stumbled across their leader one night and heard his plans. Something about messing with dimensions in an effort to ambush a "Gravy Trader," whoever that was. The sheriff put up wanted posters and rounded up the best shooters in town. But it was already too late. The strangers had bigger guns — guns that could never exist in the real world.

Dry Gulch never had a chance. (Unless you and Coconut Monkey can help...check out page 21 for information on this month's *Quake II* level, "Dry Gulch," from the creators of Coconut Monkey's last adventure, "Paradise Lost.")

Quick Start for The CD

1. Insert the CD.
2. If Autorun does not start the CD, click the Start button and choose Run. Type *X:\PCGAMER.COM* where *X* is the letter of your CD-ROM drive.
3. This will run *The CD*.

System Requirements

Windows 95, 486/33, 4MB RAM, Mouse

NOTE: These requirements are for loading our front-end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.

Attention Win3.1 Users

The *PC Gamer* front end was created for Windows 95. If you run Windows 3.1, you will have to install Win 3.1 demos separately.

Get Demos for Free!

Newsstand buyers have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of *PC Gamer* for $7.99, or *PC Gamer* without a CD-ROM for $4.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos in a couple of different ways:

1. Download demos and check out *PC Gamer*'s web site at *www.pcgamer.com* on the Internet. Our web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot web pages, and daily gaming news.

2. Call PFC at (800) 865-7240 (between the hours of 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. CST, Mon. - Fri.) to have *The CD* mailed to you for only $7.99 shipping and handling.

Disc Editors' Note

If you receive a "Dispatcher initialization error 11" message while starting our interface, you can download a new version of the front end from our web site, or you can install the demos manually using the commands listed below.

CONTENTS / MANUAL INSTALLATION COMMANDS

Installation Shortcuts

In the event our interface doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, simply use the Start-Run command for Windows 95, or the File-Run command from the Program Manager for Windows 3.1. When the dialog box appears, type in the letter of your CD-ROM drive, followed by the directory and install command listed at the right.

For example, to install the *SiN* demo type *X:\SINDEMO\SIN_DEMO.EXE* where *X* is the letter of your CD-ROM drive, and press Enter. The setup program for *SiN* will then run. You can also use the File Manager or Explorer to find the appropriate directory on *The CD*, and then double-click on the installation command.

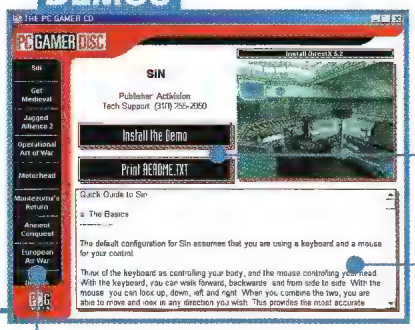
Please remember that if you're using Windows 3.1, you cannot run most Windows 95 demos or our front end.

* Indicates that the demo requires DirectX to run. Install DirectX by running DXSETUP.EXE in the \DIRECTX directory on *The CD*.

Demo	Directory	Install Command	Page	OS
SiN*	\SINDEMO	SIN_DEMO.EXE	10	WIN95
Get Medieval*	\GMDEMO	GMDEMINS.EXE	13	WIN95
Jagged Alliance*	\JA2DEMO	SETUP.EXE	14	WIN95
Operational Art of War*	\TOAWDEMO	SETUP.EXE	20	WIN95
Motorhead*	\MHDEMO	MHFOXINTRO.EXE	21	WIN95
Montezuma's Return*	\MONTZUMA	MRDEM126.EXE	22	WIN95
Ancient Conquest	\ACDEMO	SETUP.EXE	22	WIN95
European Air War*	\EAW_DEMO	SETUP.EXE	27	WIN95
Plane Crazy*	\PLNECRZY	PCRAZYDEMO.EXE	27	WIN95
Cyberstorm 2*	\CS2DEMO	CS2DEMO.EXE	28	WIN95
Air Hockey	\AIRHOCKY	AIRHOCKY.EXE	28	WIN95
Morpheus	\MORPHEUS	SETUP.EXE	30	WIN95
Way Point Zeta*	\WPZDEMO	START.EXE	30	WIN95
EarthLink	\EARTHL	SETUP.EXE	31	WIN95
MindSpring	\MSPRING	SETUP.EXE	31	WIN95
DirectX 5.0				WIN95
Patches				285

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND

DEMOS

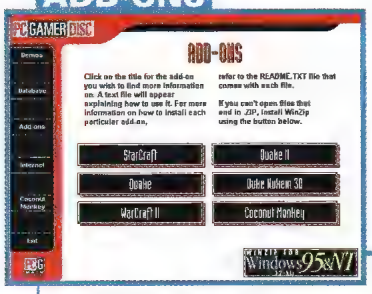

PC GAMER DISC
SiN
Publisher: Activision
Tech Support: (310) 255-2050
Install the Demo
Print README.TXT
Quick Guide to SiN
a. The Basics
The default configuration for SiN assumes that you are using a keyboard and a mouse for your control.
Think of the keyboard as controlling your body, and the mouse controlling your head. With the keyboard, you can walk forward, backwards, and from side to side. With the mouse, you can look up, down, left and right. When you combine the two, you are able to move and view in any direction you wish. This provides the most accurate

The menu screen lets you go to any demo at any time. To access demos not available on the opening screen, just click "More Demos."

The "Install the Demo" does just what you'd expect. Most demos come with README files that further explain gameplay. If you want a hard-copy of the game's README.TXT file, click "Print README.TXT."

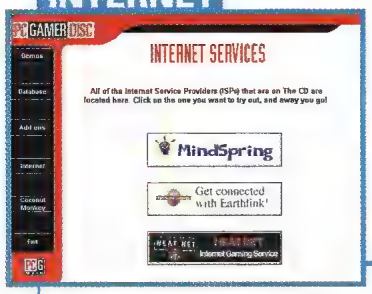
If you don't want to print the README.TXT file, you can scroll through this window and get detailed information on your selected demo.

ADD-ONS


PC GAMER DISC
ADD-ONS
Click on the title for the add-on you wish to find more information on. A text file will appear explaining how to use it. For more information on how to install each particular add-on,
refer to the README.TXT file that comes with each file.
If you can't open files that end in .ZIP, install WinZip using the button below.
StarCraft
Quake II
Quake
Duke Nukem 3D
WarCraft II
Coconut Monkey
Windows 95/NT

All the add-ons on *The CD* are located here, with instructions for use.

INTERNET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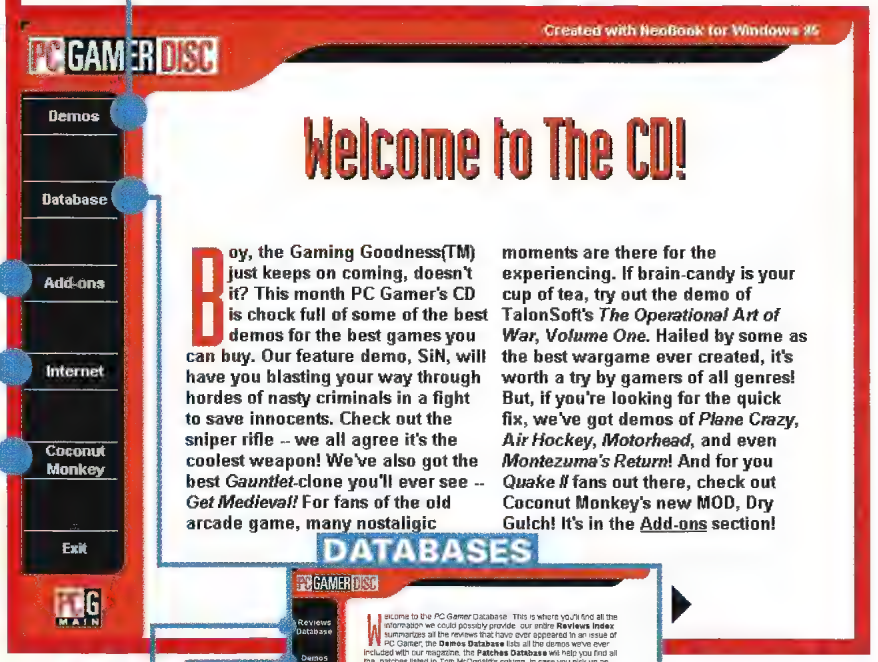
INTERNET SERVICES
All of the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that are on The CD are located here. Click on the one you want to try out, and away you go!
MindSpring
Get connected with Earthlink!
Internet Gaming Service

If you want to get online fast, this is the place to go. Get your Internet fix here!

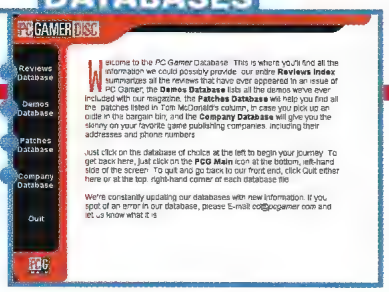
COCONUT MONKEY

PC GAMER DISC
The World of Coconut Monkey
Welcome to the World of Coconut Monkey. Here you can find games, artwork, and the tried and true words of everyone's favorite coconut simian. What kind of masterpiece has Coconut Monkey created in the past? What are his thoughts on multiplayer gaming? And what strange situations has he found himself in? Everything you ever wanted to know about CM can be found in the following pages. So click on the buttons on the left, and enjoy your adventures through the world of Coconut Monkey!

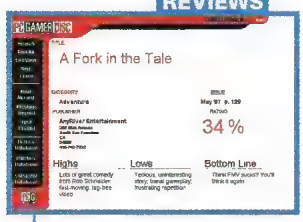
What's our lovable companion up to now? Click this button to find out!


PC GAMER DISC
Created with NeoBook for Windows 95
Demos
Database
Add-ons
Internet
Coconut Monkey
Exit
Welcome to The CD!
Boy, the Gaming Goodness(TM) just keeps on coming, doesn't it? This month PC Gamer's CD is chock full of some of the best demos for the best games you can buy. Our feature demo, SiN, will have you blasting your way through hordes of nasty criminals in a fight to save innocents. Check out the sniper rifle -- we all agree it's the coolest weapon! We've also got the best *Gauntlet*-clone you'll ever see -- *Get Medieval!* For fans of the old arcade game, many nostaligic moments are there for the experiencing. If brain-candy is your cup of tea, try out the demo of TalonSoft's *The Operational Art of War, Volume One.* Hailed by some as the best wargame ever created, it's worth a try by gamers of all genres! But, if you're looking for the quick fix, we've got demos of *Plane Crazy*, *Air Hockey*, *Motorhead*, and even *Montezuma's Return*! And for you *Quake II* fans out there, check out Coconut Monkey's new MOD, Dry Gulch! It's in the Add-ons section!
MAIN

DATABASES


PC GAMER DISC
Reviews Database
Demos Database
Patches Database
Company Database
Quit
Welcome to the PC Gamer Database. This is where you'll find all the information we could possibly provide: our entire Reviews Index summarizes all the reviews that have ever appeared in an issue of PC Gamer; the Demos Database lists all the demos we've ever included with our magazine; the Patches Database will help you find all the patches listed in Tom McDonald's column, in case you pick up an oldie in the bargain bin; and the Company Database will give you the skinny on your favorite game publishing companies, including their addresses and phone numbers.
Just click on the database of choice at the left to begin your journey. To get back here, just click on the PCG Main icon at the bottom, left-hand side of the screen. To quit and go back to our front end, click Quit either here or at the top, right-hand corner of each database file.
We're constantly updating our databases with new information. If you spot of an error in our database, please E-mail ed@pcgamer.com and let us know what it is.

REVIEWS

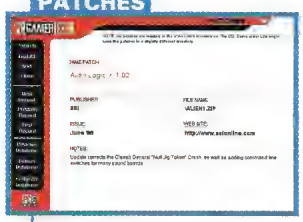


What rating did that game you found in the bargain bin get when it was new? The Reviews Database contains handy summaries of all the reviews we've ever published.

DEMOS

Which month's CD had that demo you've been meaning to try? The Demos Database tells you everything you need to know about demos that have appeared on *The CD*.

PATCHES



Looking for a patch for that ailing game? Check out our Patches Database, listing every fix and update we've covered in the Extended Play column and included on *The CD*.

COMPANY

Wondering how to reach a game's publisher? Here's the place to go. Whether you want their street address, tech support number, or web site address, we've got it all here.

SiN

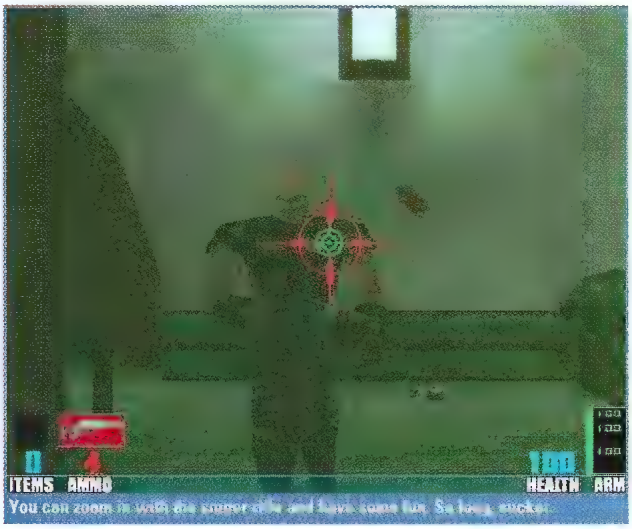
INSTALL \SINDEMO\SIN_DEMO.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (310) 255-2050
CATEGORY: Action
COMPANY: Activision
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 32MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; DirectX

All games these days must have the obligatory hottie, and in *SiN* that hottie is Elexis Sinclaire, the beautiful (yet crazed) CEO of SinTek Industries. It seems that Elexis in not happy being rich and powerful — no, she's got to go off and create an army of genetic freaks who will help her take over the world. Fortunately for the world, you're there in the form of Colonel John R. Blade, who must foil Elexis' little schemes. You grab some big-ass guns, and off you go, fighting evil and whatnot.

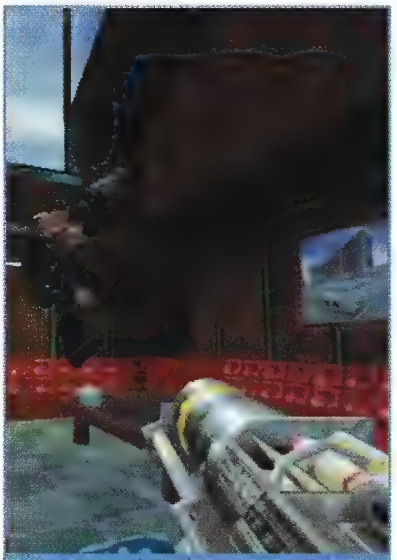
The demo features support for both software rendering and 3D acceleration. To set up the game to work with your system, go to the Controls menu, where you can access not only your video options, but sound and control options as well. Once you're happy with what you've done, back your way out and hit Game. It's here that you must decide to play by yourself or with some friends in multi-player mode. Make your choice and jump on in.

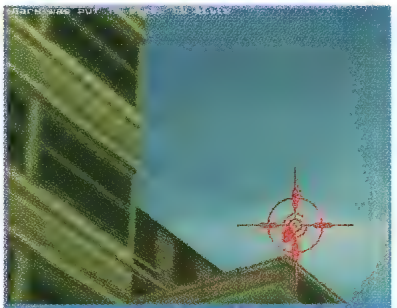
The demo features two single-player maps (if you count the helicopter shootout) and two multi-player maps. If you're at all familiar with those first-person shoot-'em-up games, you already know how to play *SiN*. Basically, you run around and shoot the bad guys. *SiN* does include a level of interaction beyond that, however, in that you can (and sometimes must) interact with the world around you. Don't leave anything untouched, as it may contain information pertaining to the game.

To play a multi-player game, simply follow the onscreen prompts — they'll direct you in selecting the map, setting up game options (unlimited ammo, weapons stay, etc.). Once that's all done and wrapped up in a little red bow, you'll be off fragging your buddies — and much fun will be had by all.



You can zoom in with the sniper rifle and have some fun. Ya bad guy sucker.


Scripted sequences and new bad guys dropping in from all over the place. Waste 'em.


Billy gets some satisfaction by wasting Gary. Ha-ha! Them brains sure are pretty!

The first mission in this demo will have you blasting baddies on a rooftop with a helicopter-mounted machine gun. Look at the size of that muzzle flash — you can do some major damage with this bad boy.

BILLY'S CHEATS

These cheats came at a heavy price, so be sure to use them wisely. To access the cheat codes, you'll need to press the ~ key (next to the 1 on the top row of numbers).

/health 999 .....Gives 999 health
/nocollision .....Walk through walls
/superfuzz .....GodMode
/wallflower .....Enemy won't shoot at you
/wuss .....Gives all weapons
/spawn heligun ...Get gun from helicopter

BILLY'S TIP

We've got a couple of tips for this lovely demo. The first is that the sniper rifle does include a zoom mode, which lets you get up close and personal. The default key for this command is 0. Press 0 once to select the sniper rifle, again to enter sniper mode, and again to exit. The player models feature area specific damage, so a head shot means instant death, while a leg shot just makes the other guy whimper and limp around.

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ABC

Get Medieval

INSTALL \GMDEMO\GMDEMINS.EXE
TECH SUPPORT *support@lith.com*

CATEGORY: Arcade
COMPANY: Monolith
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 32MB RAM; 18MB hard-drive space; 2MB video card; DirectX

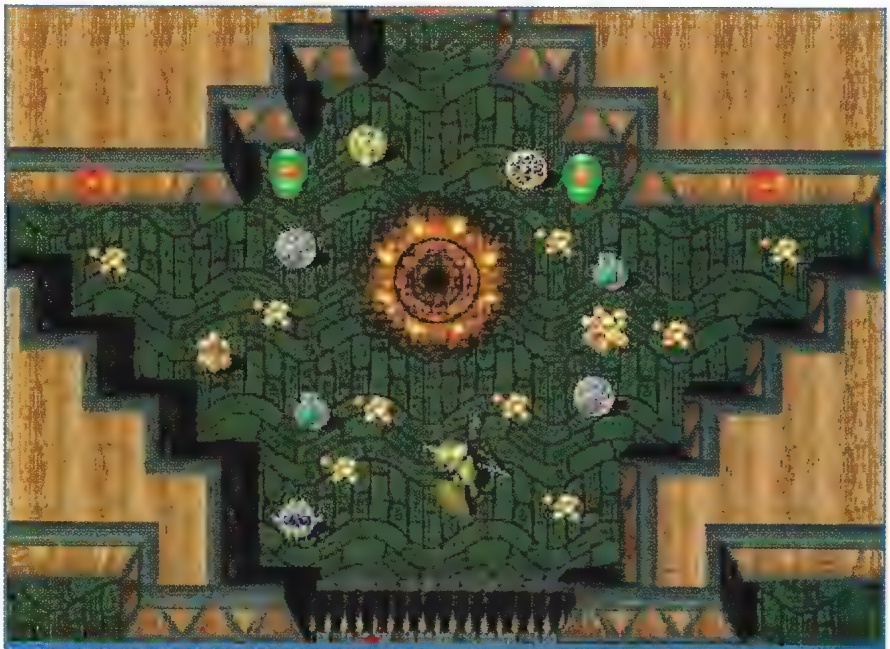
Once upon a time there was a coin-op game called *Gauntlet*, and there was much rejoicing (and the loss of fortunes in quarters) among gamers everywhere. Not only was it addictive and fun, but it let four players explore those dark dungeons together. It was a dark day when those machines disappeared from the arcades. A dark day, indeed.

Well, now's a good time to be alive, because the fine folks at Monolith have captured that same magic with *Get Medieval*. This game is essentially based on the same concept — you wander around collecting goodies like gold, while fighting off monsters and such. Keys give you access to chests and other areas of the map, and as you progress through the game, the baddies get meaner, and the gold becomes shinier.

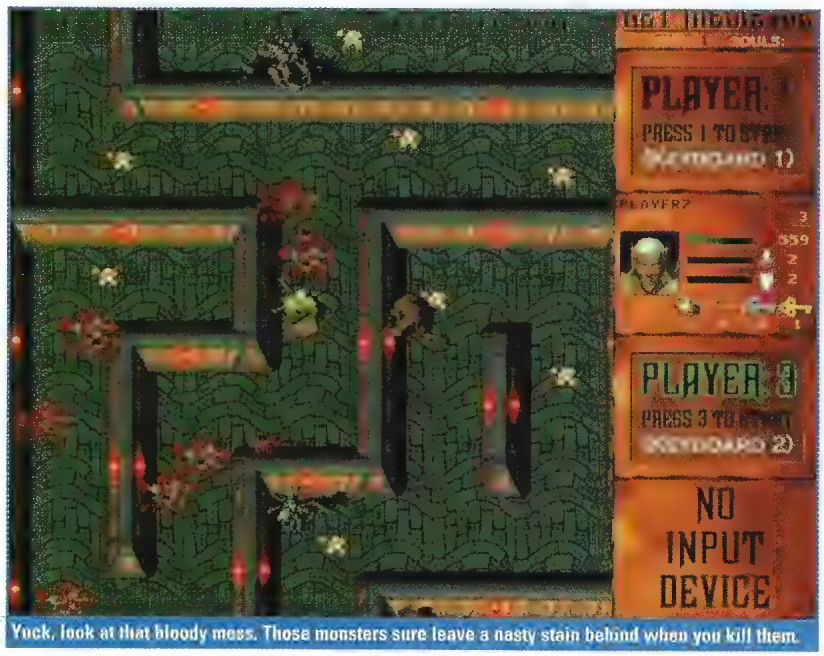
The demo features three levels from the full game and lets you play as Eryc the Archer. He's a wisecracking little fellow who can shoot arrows really fast. To play the demo, select New Game, choose your difficulty level — and that's pretty much it. The monsters all come from various structures — destroy those structures, and you'll stop them cold (plus, you'll get something cool, like a key). The treasure chests contain power-ups that can increase your weapon's power or strengthen your armor.

Some of the power-ups do cool things like give you more arrows (so you can shoot multiple arrows at once instead of just one), and make you shoot that little bow faster than the human eye can follow. Watch your health, which is the green bar on the right side of the screen next to Eryc's head. If that starts to run low, you'll need to get some of that magic potion, health goodness, which will fix you right up. (Elf is about to die. Elf needs food badly!) After you get some chow, head back out and crack some monster skulls. Those fiends don't deserve to live.

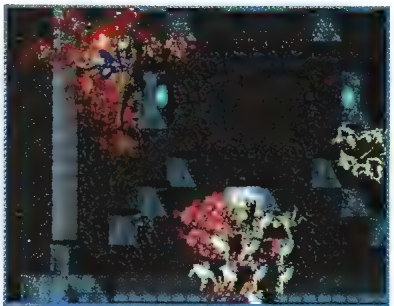
Make sure you scour the entire level before moving on; you don't want to leave any little trinkets behind. The full version of *Get Medieval* (reviewed in this issue) features four warriors to choose from, loads and loads more levels, and multi-player support so as many as four people can play at once. Yowza!



Look at all the goodies just waiting for you to snatch 'em. Hooray — gold me for me, none for you!



Yuck, look at that bloody mess. Those monsters sure leave a nasty stain behind when you kill them.



Look at that gore! Man, them beasties are just as ugly on the inside as they are on the out.

BILLY'S TIP

When the monsters come after you, it's in your best interest to shoot them. Don't be getting soft and mushy and feel bad about shooting them — they're monsters after all, and have no business living. In fact, you're doing them a favor by splattering them all over the floor. Deep down, they probably hate themselves for being monsters and charge you in the hope that you will slay them. Help them out, won't you?

Jagged Alliance 2

INSTALL \JA2DEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (315) 393-6644
CATEGORY: Strategy
COMPANY: Sir-tech
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 110MB hard-drive space; DirectX

The ruler of Arulco has been overthrown in a coup, so you must lead your expert team of mercenaries into battle, with the goal of replacing the fallen ruler. It's not going to be easy, though, because the entire military (along with several other surprises) are none too eager to give up control of Arulco. To pull off this small miracle, you'll need to hire the right mercs, lead them in combat, deal with the locals, and loads of other things too numerous to mention here.

Jagged Alliance 2 is the sequel to the Editors' Choice-rated *Jagged Alliance*. The demo is not the first level of the game, but is designed to give you a taste of what to expect — you'll confront some enemies, yak it up with the local folks, and do some old-fashioned searching.

Playing the demo can be a fairly complex affair, so be sure to take your time and work your way through all the screens. There's also a hint text file included with the demo; look for it in the demo's directory: *C:\programfiles\Ja2demo*. You play using the mouse — simply click on one of your characters, then click where you want him to go. When you're merely walking around, exploring the terrain and talking to the locals, the game runs in real-time, meaning your boys (and ladies) will move as soon as you tell them to. When you enter combat, the game becomes turn-based, with each of your units assigned a specific number of action points. Be sure to keep this in mind while in real-time, as it will allow you to plan ahead and create defensive perimeters, etc.

This screen provides an overhead map view, plus more detailed commands for each of your units.

To enter a building, move the mouse over the door, and it will turn into a hand; if the door is unlocked, just click the door and one of your units will walk over and open it. If the door is locked, you'll need to find something to open it with (think crowbar). Occasionally there will be people inside. To start a conversation, move the mouse over the person and a pair of lips will appear; click the person and the conversation begins. Some people will offer advice, others have things for sale. Be sure to take the time to see if they have anything to offer you — there are things that could be useful later in the game.

"Well, well, well! If you're looking for something, I didn't take it. If ya come to find out something, I don't know it. And, lastly, if you're just looking to chat, well, ya found the right person."
IVAN
SHADOW
VICKI
BASKET
DR. Q
Go ahead and talk with some of the local folk — you may just learn something useful.

BILLY'S TIP

The man in the garage will sell you some cool things if you just ask. The other guy, Gabby, has nothing to sell you, but if you have the patience to listen to his rants, you'll get some info.

CONTROL KEYS

Change Cursor Level	Tab
Cycle Enemies	Enter
Select Merc(s)	F1 – F8
Select Next Merc	Spacebar
Cycles Multiple Targets	N
Run Mode	R
Standing	S
Crouch	C
Prone	P
Options Screen	O
Look Cursor	L

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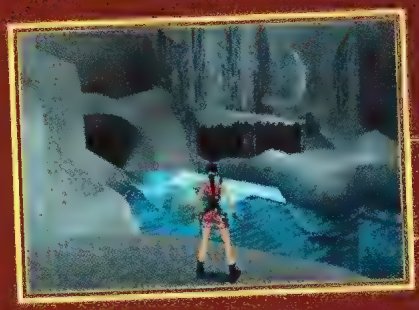

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but sorry, still no nude code.

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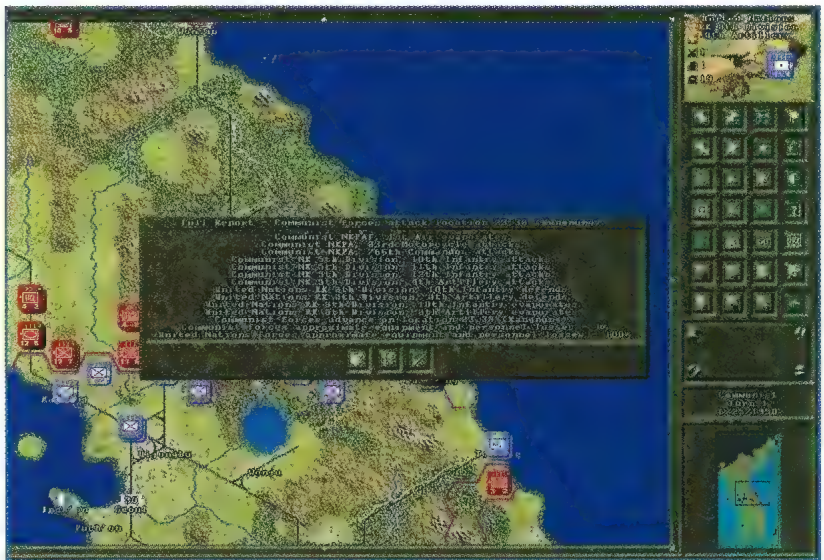
The Operational Art of War

INSTALL \TOAWDEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT www.talonsoft.com/tech_support
CATEGORY: Wargame
COMPANY: TalonSoft
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 133;16MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; DirectX

Created by Norm Koger, the designer of such games as *Red Lightning* and the Age of Rifles series, *The Operational Art of War* is a deep and involving strategy game. We'll go over basic game instructions, but it's in your best interest to study the readme file that comes with the demo; it's six pages long and contains much more detailed information on gameplay.

The demo lets you play one scenario: Korea 50-51 (the list shows the other scenarios available in the full game; you just won't be able to select them). To start the demo, select Korea 50-51 — scenario notes will appear on the right, and you can read them by scrolling down. At the bottom is a row of buttons; the third one from the left lets you select the type of game you want to play. If it's your first time, select United Nations Computer vs. Human Play. Click the checkmark to begin.



After each battle, this screen will appear with a detailed summary of what just happened.

Select one of your units and send it off to battle.

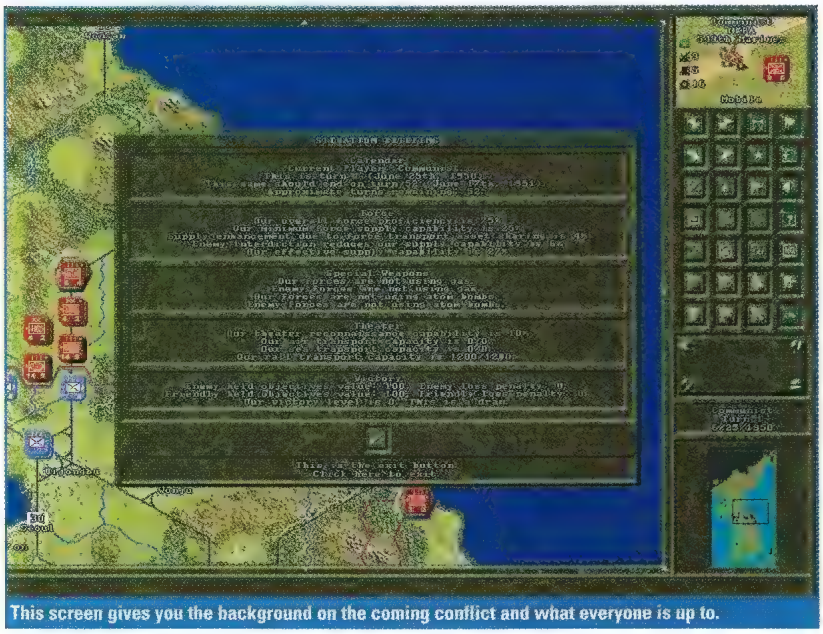
Your units will appear in red, and the UN forces will be blue. To attack a nearby unit, move the cursor over the enemy unit; it will turn into a little crosshair. Right-click on the enemy unit, and a sub-menu will appear. You can have a single unit attack, or (if multiple units are available) you can have all units attack. To move a unit, click on it and move the mouse to the spot on the map you want that force to occupy. A set of arrows will appear, showing the unit's path; right-click, and they'll head for their destination.

You can also move the cursor over an enemy unit, which will show you what type of equipment it has, etc. It's definitely a good idea to learn everything you can about the enemy units — this isn't *Quake*, and you could pay dearly for rushing into battle unprepared.

In fact, it's important to keep in mind that you cannot see all of the enemy units on the map — only the ones closest to you. So while it may appear that there are only two units in a specific area, there could be more behind the front line. (Or, there could be none at all — use some of that strategy.) Don't attack unless you have the forces to hold off a substantial counter-attack, because if the UN forces punch through your line, it's all over.

During the course of the campaign, certain things (such as nuclear weapons) will become available to each side based upon the action of the game. If the Koreans advance beyond a certain longitude and latitude, the UN will have nukes at their disposal, so watch it.

Again, the readme file for the demo contains more details. Print it out and keep it handy while you play your first few games.



This screen gives you the background on the coming conflict and what everyone is up to.

Will the Communists over-take Korea? Only you can decide — roll those tanks.

Coconut Monkey Goodies

You thought it couldn't be done. No *Quake II* level could top "Paradise Lost," starring Coconut Monkey and that dastardly fellow Pierre. Well, buckos and buckettes, you thought wrong.

We are proud to give you "*PC Gamer* Presents: Dry Gulch," another *Quake II* level starring everyone's favorite simian and our favorite mascot, Coconut Monkey. This time he finds himself stuck in the old west, separated not only from his boat, but from his only copy of *Gravy Trader* as well. Oh, and as if that wasn't enough: Pierre and his little cronies have shown up, and they're none too pleased that Coconut Monkey is still alive and kicking. "Dry Gulch" was created by the award-winning team behind "Paradise Lost": Neil Manke on conga drums and design, with Andrew Eglington on keyboards and models and skins. Take a bow, fellas!

Now, we realize that not everyone has *Quake II*, so we managed to convince CM to loan us one of his coloring books so we could offer you another treat (not only is CM a master game designer, but he is an amazing artist as well). Titled *Everyday Tragedies*, this coloring book is a unique peek into the mind of Coconut Monkey, and it features several pages of breathtaking work by artist Mark Bloodworth, and even a couple of paint-by-the-numbers pictures. The coloring book is stored on *The CD* as an Adobe Acrobat file, so you'll need to have the Acrobat Reader installed on your machine (fortunately, we had the foresight to include it on *The CD*).

Getting the coloring book up and running is easy; "Dry Gulch" is a bit more complicated. Be sure to take the time and read the entire readme file included with the levels. It contains detailed information that'll give you all the answers you need.

Boy, does it look hot down there. This is just a taste of what to expect in "Dry Gulch."

Motorhead

INSTALL \MHDEMO\MHFOXINTRO.EXE
TECH SUPPORT www.foxinteractive.com/support

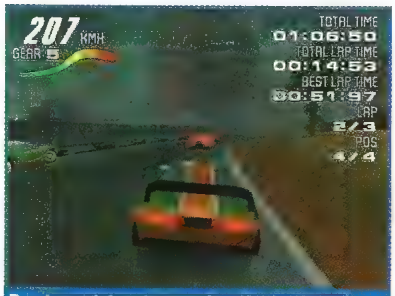
CATEGORY: Racing
COMPANY: Fox Interactive
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 133; 24MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; SVGA video card; DirectX

Racing is cool, and everyone knows it. There's nothing more thrilling than roaring down a track at 200 miles an hour with nothing more than a little metal between you and the road. And with *Motorhead*, you can experience that thrill like never before!

The demo lets you experience three laps of one race; you control your car using the arrow buttons on your keyboard. By default, you have a first-person view of the race, but you can change your view to third-person by pressing F2.

Playing is simple: race around the track and finish before the other cars. Watch the corners (a couple are pretty tricky), and you should do just fine.

SPECIAL NOTE: There are two versions of the *Motorhead* demo on *The CD*. One is a 3Dfx version, the other a software version. Be sure to install the one that matches your hardware setup.



Put the pedal to the metal — the feeling of speed in *Motorhead* will blow you away.

CONTROL KEYS

Steer right	→
Steer left	←
Accelerate	↑
Break	↓
Rear view	Spacebar
In car view	F1
Out car view	F2
External view	F3
Exit demo	esc

QUESTION:

There's two outs with a runner on third, count is two and two, and the game is on the line. As the pitcher winds up, you see your teammate barreling towards home and you step away from the plate. The ump yells "Strike Three," at the same time your teammate touches home. The run scores?

TRUE
Go to Page 253

or

FALSE
Go to Page 307

Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #352

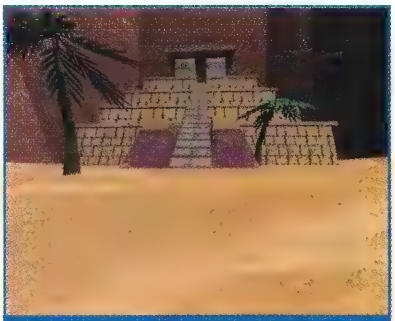
Montezuma's Return

INSTALL \MONTZUMA\MRDEM126.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (800) 434-2637
CATEGORY: Adventure
COMPANY: WizardWorks
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 24MB hard-drive space; DirectX

Back in 1348, with the Spanish encroaching on all fronts, Montezuma hid all of his loot at the bottom of a Aztec temple and had his wizard boys whip up some curses to keep folks out. Those curses have worked for over 500 years, but now Max Montezuma has shown up, and he's anxious to get his hands on the family loot (after all, he's a descendant of the original Montezuma, so it's rightfully his).

In *Montezuma's Return*, you play as good old Max, and you must explore underground mazes and all sorts of other creepy places if you want to get that wonderful treasure. The demo offers both software-only and 3Dfx-accelerated graphics modes, so choose the one that matches your system. The controls are set to use the keyboard by default, but you can enable your gamepad; you'll just need to enter the Controls area and click Enable Gamepad.

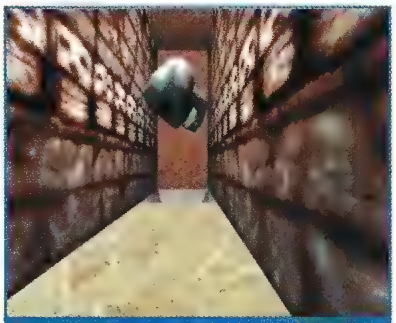
The demo is pretty straightforward — you wander around the temples looking for loot and fighting the occasional native or giant rat (there are even a few giant birds tossed in for good measure — if only you could get 'em to eat the giant rats...). There are traps that must be avoided, and you'll need to use that brain of yours to figure out how to access all the areas.



Look at that place! There's got to be some kick-ass treasure hidden away inside.

CONTROL KEYS

Forward	↑
Backward	↓
Left	←
Right	→
Look Up	page up
Look Down	page down
Jump	Ctrl
Punch	Shift



The bouncy skull is just one of the traps you'll face as you search for that gold.

Ancient Conquest

INSTALL \ACDEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT megamed@wantree.com.au
CATEGORY: Strategy
COMPANY: Megamedia Australia
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 16MB Ram; 65MB hard-drive space; mouse

Ancient Conquest is a real-time strategy game set during the time of Hercules and Jason (you remember them; they're Greek heroes, and they were in some movies and such). Since the sea was the primary mode of transportation in those days, you go to war in ships.

Send your boys out to gather some fish. Mmm, them's good eatin'!

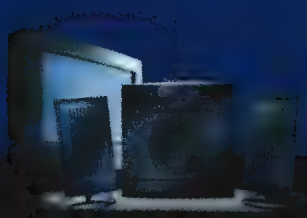
The demo lets you play multi-player against one other person; it also has one single-player scenario and a non-interactive demo of the game. To get to the single-player action, select Start Scenario. You'll be given a brief synopsis of your mission objective(s). Select your level of difficulty, and you're all set.

Like most RTS games, you'll need to gather resources (in this case fish and gold; these were simpler times). To fish, click one of your ships, then click on an area of the water where you see schools of fish. The ship will automatically go over, gather them up, and take them back to port. You're also given a shipyard, which lets you build more ships. Click on it, then select the type of ship you want to construct. You can also build and train men and move them onto the ship.

This looks pleasant, huh? Someone must have woken up on the wrong side of the bed this morning. Stay close to home until you have a bigger force built up.

In the early going, don't venture too far from your port — there are a lot of heavily armored ships out there, and they'll kick your butt back to Athens in a hurry. Bide your time, gather some resources, and build a decent force before venturing out into the real world. Sea ya later, landlubber!

See it with your eyes closed.



Can you play with your eyes shut? It's not easy with traditional speakers, which create unwanted audio reflections that can mask your games' 3D effects. But Monsoon uses Planar Focus technology to precisely direct sound energy so you hear every sound exactly where your game puts it – even behind you. With its powerful, matched subwoofer, you're drenched in sound from every direction. Monsoon is available as part of select new multimedia computers, or for purchase through www.monsoonpower.com or toll free at 1-877-722-8346.

MONSOON

PLANAR FOCUS TECHNOLOGY

3D sound card may be required. ©1998, Monsoon.

Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #499

RECOIL

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

designed for WINDOWS®95 CD-ROM

ZIPPER INTERACTIVE

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Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #841

FOR THOSE WHO THINK GUN CONTROL HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH AIM.

Command a rapid motion battle force tank. Morph into four different vehicle types: land, hover, amphibious and submersible.

Tote 18 high-powered weapons of mass destruction.

Battle your way through six treacherous, mission-based worlds.

Manipulate high-tech indoor environments and striking outdoor textures, or become one with the earth.

Playable demo available at www.vie.com/recoil

REDJACK

REVENGE OF THE BRETHREN

From the creators of
Titanic: Adventure Out of Time

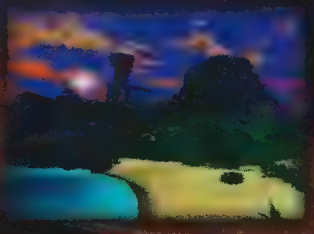
"RedJack: Revenge of the Brethren is a delight to play."
- Game[illegible]fan

"Swab the decks and get ready for some good, old-fashioned pirate action."
- PC Gamer

In-depth storyline

CINEMATIC

Stunning scenery



IN-GAME

Challenging puzzles

CINEMATIC

Non-stop action

IN-GAME

THQ

Mac OS

An epic graphic adventure coming soon for PC/Mac hybrid

RedJack: Revenge of the Brethren, the RedJack: Revenge [illegible] THQ INC
Cyberflix and Dream Factory TM & © 1998 [illegible]

Download the demo at www.thq.com

www.pcgamer.com/request Product #765

European Air War

INSTALL \EAW_DEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (510) 522-1164

CATEGORY: Strategy
COMPANY: MicroProse
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 22MB hard-drive space; DirectX; Mouse

After Germany took France, they set their sights on England. Battles raged daily as German pilots struggled with both British and American fliers to achieve complete air superiority. With *European Air War*, you're given the chance to take to the skies in an effort to help your country's cause.

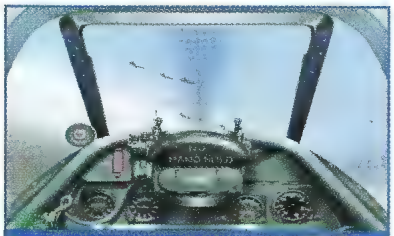
The demo lets you choose between two different planes: the P-51D Mustang and the Focke-Wulf Fw190A-8. If you choose to fly with the Allies in the Mustang, your mission is to escort the bombers and protect them from German planes. If you want to fly with the Germans, your mission is to attack approaching bombers. Bring down as many as you can!

The demo is timed, allowing you five minutes to mix it up with the enemy forces. There's also an rather extensive readme file that provides a complete listing of keyboard commands and also offers tips in such matters as dogfighting and how to attack a group of escorted bombers. You'll probably want to print out the readme and review it before jumping into the demo. Also refer to the controls listed here. It's always more fun if you know what's going on!

CONTROL KEYS

Flight Key Up	↑
Flight Key Down	↓
Flight Key Right	→
Flight Key Left	←
Fire Selected Guns	Spacebar
Next Gun	S
Previous Gun	Shift + S
Select All Guns	Z
Select Machine	X
Select Cannons	C
Display Active Guns	Ctrl + S

As you close in on the bombers' targets, all hell breaks loose. Watch out for that anti-aircraft fire!



Those bombers are depending on you for their safety — don't let them down.

Plane Crazy

INSTALL \PLNECRZY\PCRAZYDEMO.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (650) 802-4400

CATEGORY: Racing
COMPANY: SegaSoft
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 16MB RAM; 75MB hard-drive space; 2MB SVGA video card; DirectX

There have been car racing games, go-cart racing games, boat racing games, and even a couple of camel racing games. But for some reason, there have been no plane racing games. (Unless you count *Uncle Jeb's Guide to Barnstorming*; now, that was a mean airplane racing game if there ever was one.) The fine folks at SegaSoft are looking to knock *Uncle Jeb* from that coveted spot with *Plane Crazy*.

Help will appear in the form of visual cues and text messages. Be sure you're paying attention.

The demo lets you take a spin in one suped-up plane. You'll race against other players (with as many as seven other gamers in multi-player) through crazy valleys and over all sorts of other structures. Along the way, you'll run across power-ups (and power-downs) that will either help you or hinder you in your effort to be the champion airplane racing person.

Start the demo by clicking on Quick Race and then on Border Dash. The race is timed, so if you screw around and don't pay attention to that task at hand, you'll run out of time, and your race will be over.

Good luck, and happy flying!

Hang onto your lunch, 'cause we're going in! You'll race through lots of crazy valleys in this demo.

Cyberstorm 2: Corporate Wars

INSTALL \CS2DEMO\CS2DEMO.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (206) 644-4343
CATEGORY: Strategy
COMPANY: Sierra
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 133; 24MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; 1MB SVGA video card; DirectX

In the year 3569, a jump-gate is discovered in the Typhoeus system. This gate will bring massive expansion and wealth to the corporation that controls it, and eight corporations want it. Badly.

Select those units and send 'em for some good, old-fashioned fun.

As you play through the demo, text messages will appear, providing you with valuable instructions.

So begins *Cyberstorm 2: Corporate Wars*. The demo lets you play two missions: an introductory training mission and an advanced training mission. Each mission contains specific objectives, but since they're both meant as tutorials, you'll receive assistance in the form of text boxes and voice instructions.

You play the game much like any other real-time strategy game — select your units with the mouse and click where you want them to go. Select Quick Battle, and you'll be on your way to all sorts of carnage and fighting and such. Now go forth, comrades — your corporation is counting on you.

CONTROL KEYS

Scroll Map	1 - 9
Center Map on Current Unit	5
Menu	F12
Select all Units	Z
Select Onscreen Units	X
Rotate through Units	< - >
Stop Movement of Current Unit	esc
Shields Forward	+
Shields Centered	-

Air Hockey

INSTALL \AIRHOCKY\AIRHOCKY.EXE
TECH SUPPORT *www.patchproducts.com*
CATEGORY: Arcade
COMPANY: Patch Products
REQUIRED: Windows 95; 486-66MHZ; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; 1MB SVGA video card

Those fiends at Patch Products just couldn't leave well enough alone. Nope, they had to go and make an air hockey game that features all of the fun of the 1970s pool-hall favorite, without any of the associated pain (you know — jammed fingers, sore arm, broken nose, and the dreaded puck-head). Paddle pushers everywhere have reason to rejoice.

Poor old Ray is going down — he'll never be able to stop that killer ricochet from Billy!

After starting the demo, you'll be presented with a table that has letters along the sides. To start a new game, click on the "N," then on "Single-Player" (multi-player action is disabled in the demo). You can enter your name, but you won't be able to change the difficulty settings, your paddle, or the table type. Just keep clicking "Continue" until you get to the action.

The demo lets you play one match; the first player to score ten points wins. It's pretty easy (the demo only plays at the Beginner difficulty setting), but it does give you a good taste of what to expect from the tougher levels. You play the game just like real-life air hockey, except you use the mouse. Move the mouse left and right to slam the puck, and move it up to hit with more force. Be careful not to slam the puck backwards (yes, you can flub yourself up with some bad hits, just like on a real air hockey table) and stay focused. Most importantly, though, watch out for the rabid green cheese. It's not very happy right now. Just leave it alone, and everything will be just fine.

Look, it's some intense air hockey action! Makes us want to put on frayed jeans and listen to our old KISS 8-tracks.

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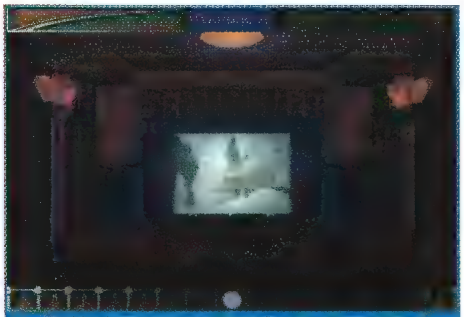
Morpheus

INSTALL \MORPHEUS\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT *www.morpheusgame.com*
CATEGORY: Adventure
COMPANY: Piranha Interactive
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 26MB hard-drive space; 640x480 display; mouse

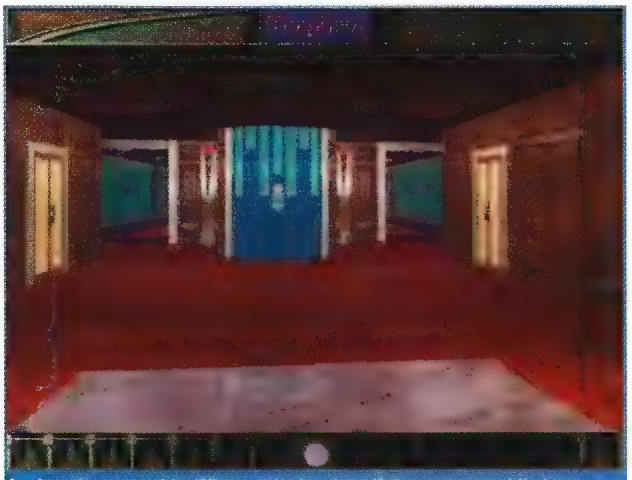
Morpheus is an adventure/puzzle game similar in style to *Myst* and *Riven*. You are an arctic explorer who discovers the decaying hull of a long-stranded ship called the *Herculania*. As you explore the ship, you begin to wonder if this is reality, or something else entirely. And why does it all seem so familiar to you?

The demo lets you have a small taste of the full game. You control your movement in the demo via the mouse. When a ship's-wheel cursor is on screen, that means that the scene is panoramic — you can only look around. When it turns into an open hand you can manipulate an object, be it a switch, lever, dial, etc. When the arrow cursor appears, you can move in that direction — simply left-click, and you'll move automatically. If a magnifying glass appears, you can zoom in on an object for a closer look.

Have fun exploring the ship, and be sure to check out the movie that's playing. You'll have to have QuickTime installed to watch it (the demo's installation process does this for you), but it's pretty nifty.



The theater will attempt to tantalize you with a nice little film, but you'll need QuickTime to watch it.



Look at the pretty ship. Why was it abandoned? Journey on and find out....

Way Point Zeta

INSTALL \WPZDEMO\START.EXE
TECH SUPPORT *www.waypointzeta.com*
CATEGORY: Action
COMPANY: Elpin Systems
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 90MB hard-drive space; D3D video card; DirectX

Ask some gamers, and they'll tell you there can never be too many *Asteroid*-style games — you know, the kind where you fly around and shoot the big rocks with the big guns? And it's with that belief that we present *Way Point Zeta*.

This screen allows you to select your ship. Choose quickly, but choose wisely.

The demo doesn't let you play any of the single-player missions, but it does let you play in multiplayer mode by yourself. How does that work? Let us explain: To start the demo, select Multi-Player, determine your connection type (such as IPX), enter your name, the session name, and press Host New Game. You'll then be taken to a screen where you can choose the type of ship you want to fly. Once that's done, a series of voice commands will tell you how to start your main engines and launch your craft into space.

That asteroid ain't so tough. I'm going to nuke the sucker!

Once out there in the wild blue yonder, you'll want to blow up some stuff — that's what you're there for, after all. Several weapons are available to you, ranging from a laser beam to an atomic bomb. Cycle through to the one that you want and let 'er rip!

SPECIAL NOTE: The demo for *Way Point Zeta* will only run in 16-bit or 8-bit color modes. If your Windows desktop is set for 24- or 32-bit color, be sure to change it before starting the demo.

BILLY'S CHALLENGE

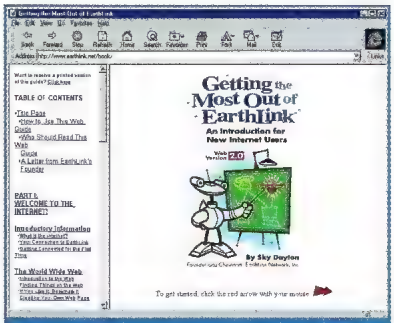
Billy managed to destroy several asteroids with one shot of the laser gun. How'd he do it?! He ain't saying, but you're welcome to try and match that awesome feat.

Earthlink

INSTALL \EARTHL\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (800) 395-8410
CATEGORY: Online service
COMPANY: Earthlink
REQUIRED: 486; 8MB RAM; 15MB HD space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; 9600bps modem

EarthLink Network, winner of the 1997 *PC Magazine* Editors' Choice Award for Best Internet Service Provider, supports all kinds of Internet games and even has its own online gaming site (*www.thearena.com*). EarthLink membership includes unlimited Internet access, unlimited E-mail, a free 6MB of space for your own web site, a free subscription to *bLink*, EarthLink's newsletter, and your choice of browser. We've got two ways for you to connect: a standard three-day trial or a special 14-day trial with a discount subscription to your favorite mag, *PC Gamer*.

For the three-day trial, just install the software and enter all the information you're prompted for. You can test the service for three days; after that, you'll be billed for $19.95 a month unless you cancel the offer.



Earthlink offers a virtual plethora of online support features, and it's all only a click away.

The 14-day trial is a bit different. Subscribe to *PC Gamer* at a special low price, and you'll get two weeks to check out EarthLink. If you've already got a subscription and take advantage of this offer, you'll get an extra year added to your account.

Toss in loads of local access numbers and excellent customer service, and Earthlink is presenting one opportunity that you can't afford to pass up.

So what are you waiting for? Load up the goodies and get ready to start surfing the Internet Earthlink style!

MindSpring

INSTALL \MSPRING\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (800) 719-4660
CATEGORY: Online service
COMPANY: MindSpring
REQUIRED: 486; 8MB RAM; 25MB HD space; SVGA; Windows 3.1+; 14.4Kbps or faster modem

MindSpring will launch you onto the Internet with all sorts of goodies at your disposal — you can use E-mail, the World Wide Web, read Usenet newsgroups, and even gain access to free news, stock information, and web support.

The pricing is competitive, too: the Light service gives you five hours of service a month for $6.95 and $2 per each additional hour, along with 5MB of web space for your own web page. The Standard plan is $14.95 a month for 20 hours, with each additional hour costing one dollar. You also get 5MB of web space with this one. The Unlimited service gives you unlimited hours for $19.95 a month (without web space), while The Works service gives you unlimited hours, along with two extra E-mail boxes and ten megabytes of web space for $26.95 a month!

MindSpring uses its Pipeline+ software to give Windows 95 users a direct TCP/IP connection to the Internet, using the Microsoft Dial-Up Adapter. That means any of those online games that say they require a TCP/IP connection will work beautifully with MindSpring. If you use Windows 3.1, MindSpring uses Connect rather than the Dial-Up Adapter, which gives you a 16-bit TCP/IP connection, so you can still play those online games (as long as they don't require a 32-bit connection). For the online gamer, MindSpring offers all you need to start fragging your friends!

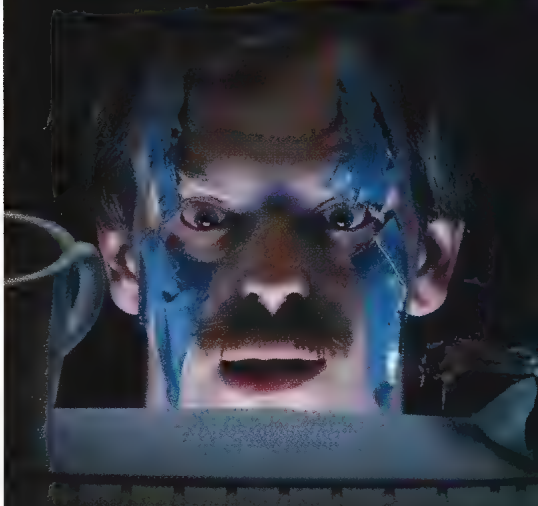
With its realistic pricing and a whole slew of services available, MindSpring is a good starting point for getting onto the Internet. Best of all, if you install the software from *The CD*, the $25 launching fee will be waived. Talk about service!

HAVING PROBLEMS?

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Please use the tech support numbers listed with the demos. You can also go to *www.pcgamer.com* for a FAQ or *http:\\support.imaginemedia.com*.

***The CD* is rigorously tested by the *PC Gamer* staff and certified virus-free. *PC Gamer* cannot be held responsible for any incompatibility problems caused by the use of *The CD*. However, should your copy fail to run, with error messages that indicate your CD drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address: Customer Service, Imagine Media, The PC Gamer October 1998 Disc 4.4 Replacement, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Please indicate any error message you receive.**

Day Two 3:30 AM



When you're going for that high score, something like sleep just gets in the way. I'm slinging DARTS in ***Play This, Play That™* Volume II.** Addicting? Oh, Yeah. Play Baseball, Cricket and other cool dart games on a choice of four boards, even an awesome *Arachnid®* electronic board for soft tips. Multi player with chat, PC or Mac, incredible graphics... I could go on, but then I'd miss the second game on the CD: Shuffleboard! Who's tired? Pass me the duct tape.

The same people who make the *Play This, Play That* series also make ***TriBond®***. The CD-ROM game that asks *What do these three have in common?®* The clues are presented by four cyber hosts and range from types of fish to films starring Harrison Ford. I love those picture *threesome™* questions, but when you can't blink, your corneas dry out. So, I keep eye drops handy too. Stop playing? Not when I can compete over the internet. Hello?! It's only 10:30 am in Germany right now! PC or Mac - it doesn't matter. Man, I gotta tell ya - when the three clues are really different - so seemingly unrelated - then bingo! I make the connection! It's a rush! Sleep is over-rated.

Download the demos from www.patchproducts.com. Then call Patch Products at 1-800-524-4263 for the store nearest you.
(Duct tape and eye drops sold separately)

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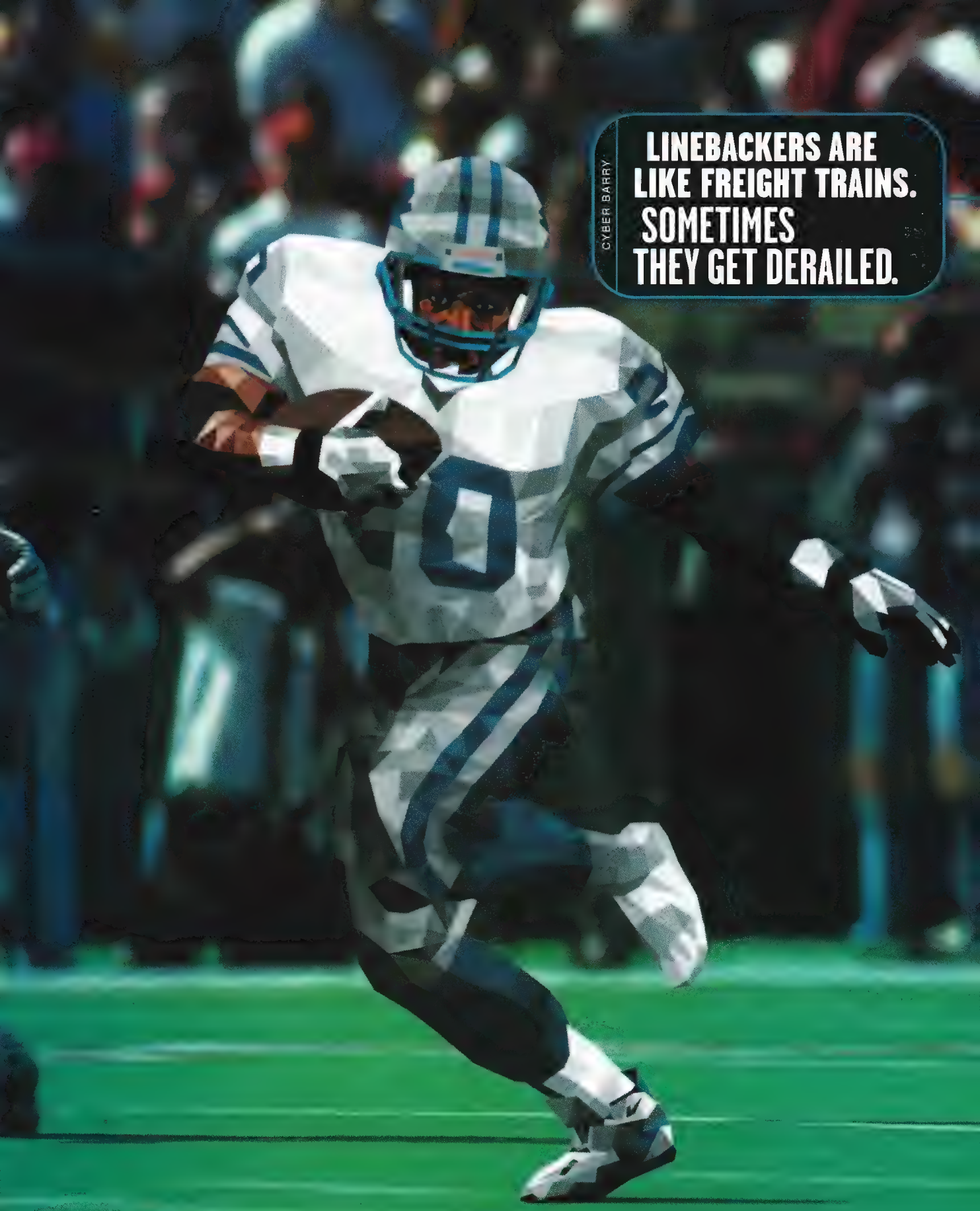
Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #608



PC

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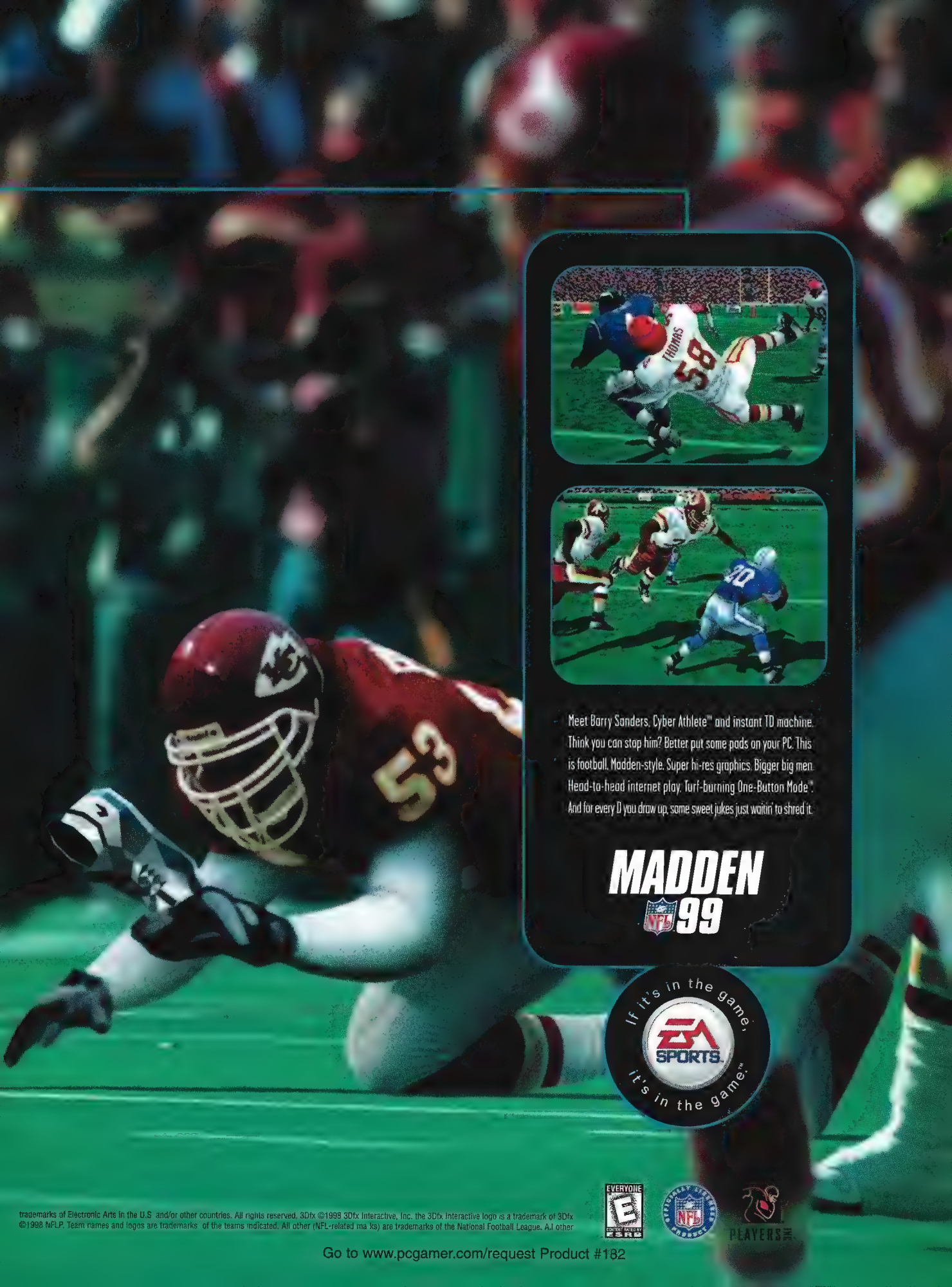
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NFL 99
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what everybody has seen

and thinking

what nobody has thought.

Albert Szent-Györgyi

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Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #028

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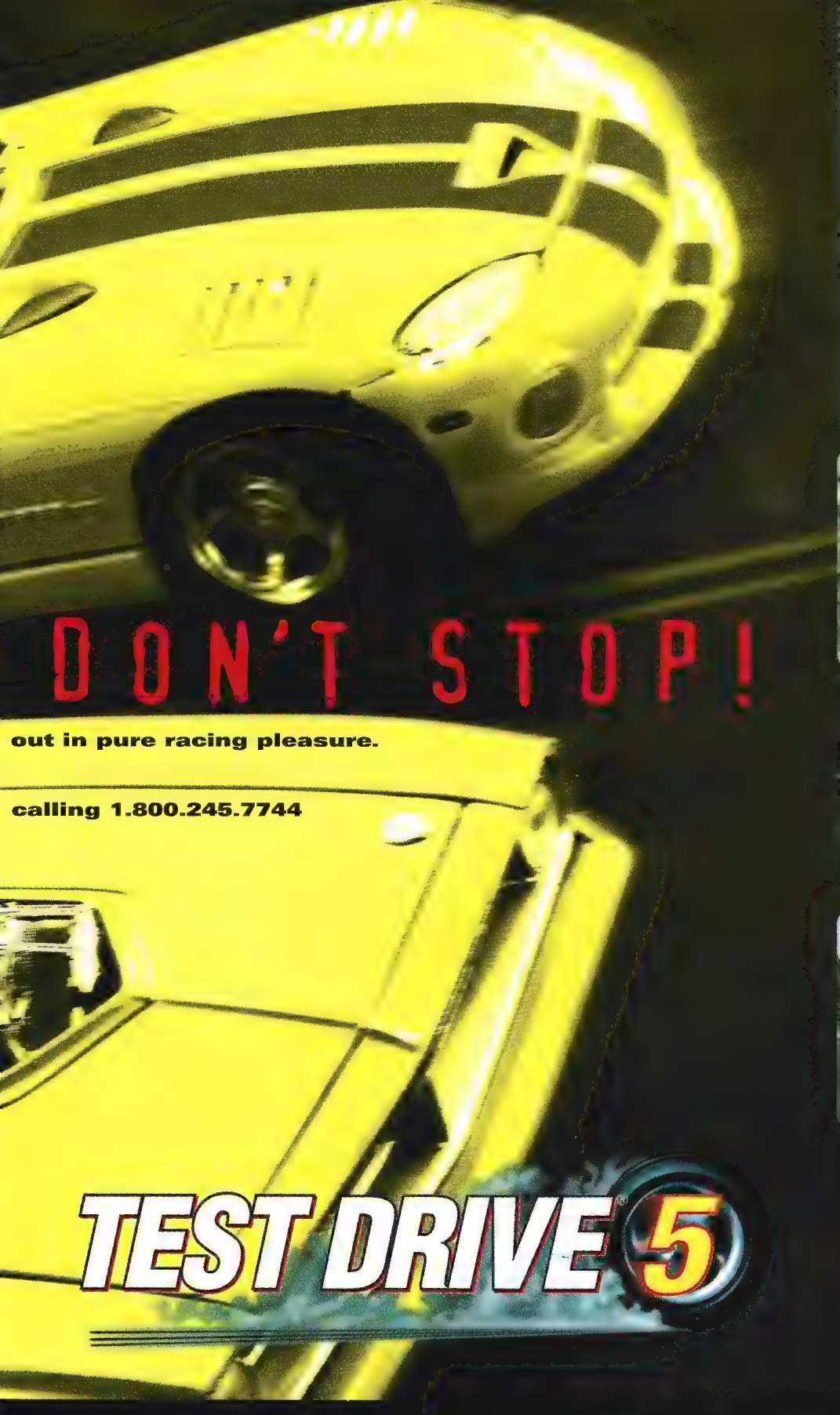
• Cop chase mode – you're the cop • More big crazy jumps, wild cop chases, cross traffic and racing mayhem



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EVERYONE CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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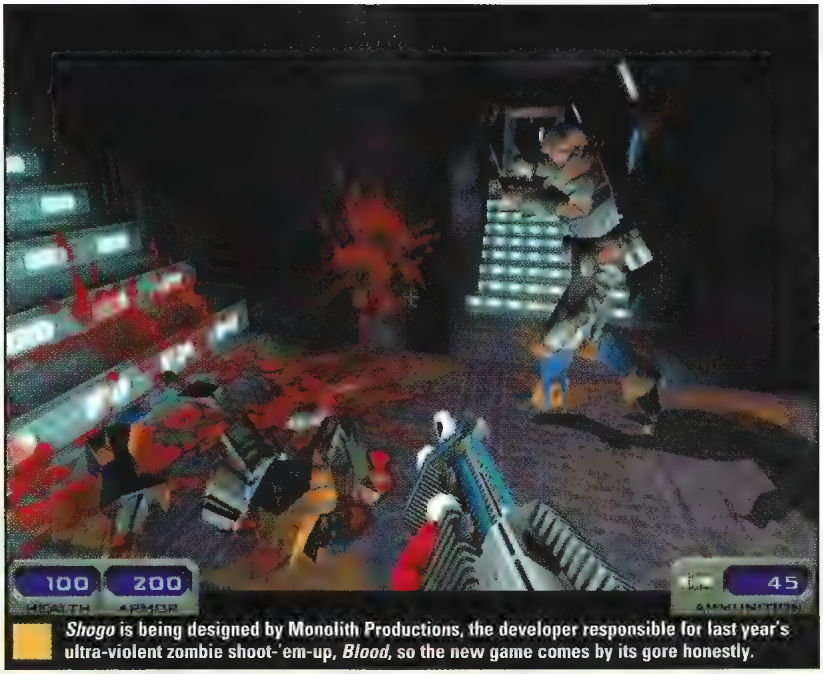
Shogo: Mobile Arm

Like big mechs? You'll like this!

Monolith is ready to dish out the action in *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*, a mech combat shooter that'll make you feel like you're living in an amazing Japanese anime world.

— Colin Williamson



***Shogo* is being designed by Monolith Productions, the developer responsible for last year's ultra-violent zombie shoot-'em-up, *Blood*, so the new game comes by its gore honestly.**

FYI — FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Category: Action
Developer: Monolith Productions
Publisher: Monolith Productions, (800) 241-GAME
www.lith.com
Percentage Complete: 90%

In a nutshell:

Shogo **is a first-person shooter from Monolith Productions, the talented team behind last year's hit *Blood*. It's set in a Japanese anime world that promises to be wonderfully cinematic. Monolith is planning for the game to have more of a storyline than more 3D shooters, and the actions you take will affect the outcome of the story.**

What's so special?

Shogo **is a shooter that lets you tromp around on foot, then hop into a giant transforming robot to do some major damage. It was inspired by Japanese animated sci-fi classic movies, so the artwork style should help it stand out from the crowded 3D shooter market.**

And when's it coming out?

October 1998

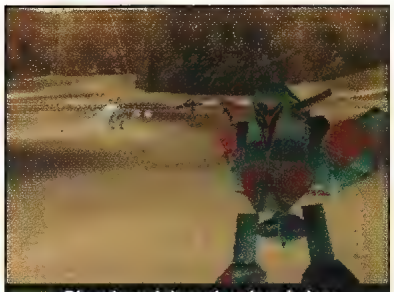
After the success of last year's enormously violent *Blood*, Monolith Productions began work on a brand-new 3D game engine and designing a spectacular new game called *Riot* to show off its power. The project began under sponsorship from Microsoft, which was planning to dub Monolith's technology the *DirectEngine*. Midway through the year, though, creative differences led the Monolith folks to buy the rights to publish their game on their own. What was to be Microsoft's *DirectEngine* is now known as Monolith's LithTech, and *Riot* has been renamed *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*.

But *Shogo* is no mere 3D shooter — it combines the traditional on-foot gameplay of its competition with some fast-paced transforming-mech combat.

In addition to the usual on-foot action you'd expect from a 3D shooter, *Shogo* will put players into giant, anime-style mechs for some serious bot-busting action.

or Division

The *Shogo* story line takes place on a decrepit planet named Cronus, which happens to be incredibly rich in an organic energy source called *kato*. Several megacorporations — all adept at creating *MCAs*, or mobile combat armor — have made their homes on Cronus, but a new terrorist faction called the Fallen has stepped in, fighting the kato-mining consortium. Led by a madman known as Gabriel, the Fallen threaten the safety of Cronus' inhabitants. You play as Sanjiro Makabe, a member of the UCA Security force. Your lover, along with two of your best friends, were killed in a recon mission against Gabriel's factions, and you've been given the opportunity to lead the assassination mission against him. Mayhem is sure to ensue....

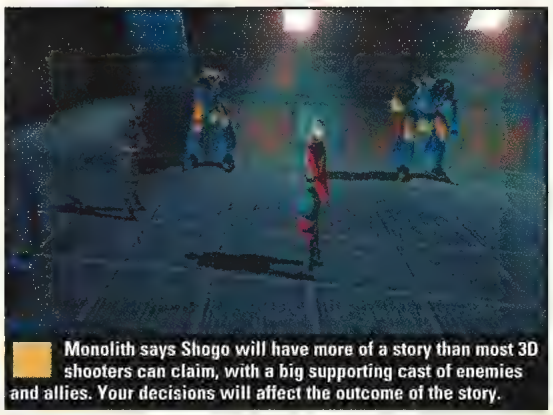


Big robots doing what they do best — blowing the crap out of each other.

"We're going for a very cinematic experience, complete with reversals, revelations, and a cast of major characters who either help or hinder your mission," says Craig Hubbard, *Shogo*'s lead designer. "On Cronus, you'll find yourself in cities, outdoor areas, underground facilities, and various other locales. The game is meant to make you feel like you're the main character in an action movie — an anime movie, specifically." For inspiration, the team watched such Japanese animated films as *Macross Plus*, *Ghost in the Shell*, and *Evangelion* — films that put as much emphasis on character development as on mammoth explosions.

The end result is a hangar full of mechs that are yours to command — but these aren't the lumbering monsters of the MechWarrior games.

"Our MCAs are totally anthropomorphic, so they're fast, highly maneuverable, and transformable," says Hubbard. "Anime mecha are fast, sleek giant robots distinguished by uncanny — and highly improbable — physical prowess and grace. We're going for adrenaline, not plausibility."



Monolith says Shogo will have more of a story than most 3D shooters can claim, with a big supporting cast of enemies and allies. Your decisions will affect the outcome of the story.

In *Shogo*, the way you play the game can really affect the outcome of the story line, even determining which levels you play, Hubbard says.

"On the simplest level, if you're in a civilian area

Shogo will be the debut of the LithTech engine, which supports effects like 3D models with their own light sources and sprites attached — perfect for rocket exhausts and smoke trails.

As its cast of characters suggests, *Shogo* is inspired by Japanese animated sci-fi films like *Evangelion*, *Ghost in the Shell*, and the Macross movies.

From all indications, Monolith's LithTech is a very capable 3D engine.

Shogo's death animations promise to be detailed and varied.

All of Shogo's warring megacorporations have access to mech technology.

and you shoot a bystander, guards will come running," he says. "You can end up making things a lot harder on yourself if you take a sociopathic approach. Additionally, there are areas of the game that you may or may not see. Rather than following the traditional *Doom* paradigm of secret levels you have to find by searching diligently, we wanted to include optional areas you reach by playing the game in a certain way. The flow of the game depends on what you do, not where you look." *Shogo* is broken up into three acts, and your response to a specific event at the end of the second will determine which of the two final acts you'll get to experience.

The LithTech engine used for *Shogo* was designed from the ground up by the Monolith team. It was designed under DirectX 6.0, and supports the usual bevy of visual effects, plus some new eye-candy — you'll get to take in sky-shadow mapping that creates stunning cloud effects, chrome mapping for glittering metal, and — most importantly — a system that adjusts the complexity of the game's 3D models in real-time to match your system's power.

The LithTech engine has an "entity system" that gives designers a great deal of control over the appearance of objects and characters in the game.

"We can attach models to other models," says Project Manager John Jack. "So, when you see a Shocktrooper carrying an assault rifle, the rifle is actually a separate model, to which we can attach muzzle flashes or lights. This also allows us to give any AI any weapon. We can also pull off some pretty cool effects, like having lights and sprites attached to a model, such as headlights for cars, and smoke particles for thrusters."

> **"For our purposes — and for a lot of external developers — LithTech is the best 3D game engine available, period."**
>
> —JOHN JACK, *SHOGO* PROJECT MANAGER

The Monolith studio also has a full-fledged motion capture suite, and much of the human and mech movements were taken from live actors. In terms of animation, the LithTech engine uses hard-body animation (as seen in *Virtua Fighter*) to animate the mech, along with a soft-body mesh system (a la *Quake*) for some of the more organic characters. Enemies will react in a different fashion, depending on where you shoot them, and Jack promises the death animations will be quite varied.

The LithTech engine was designed for multi-player from the very start, and its client-server architecture will support TCP/IP, IPX, and modem play. Users with fast machines and speedy connections will be able to run their own servers (*GameSpy* support is likely).

Jack says the base system for *Shogo* is a Pentium 166MHz with 32MB of RAM. Direct3D-compatible cards will be supported, but not required.

"We realize that many of our customers have yet to upgrade to 3D hardware, especially in the international markets," says Jack. "The focus for the LithTech team has definitely been on hardware support, but we've been working on a software renderer for some time."

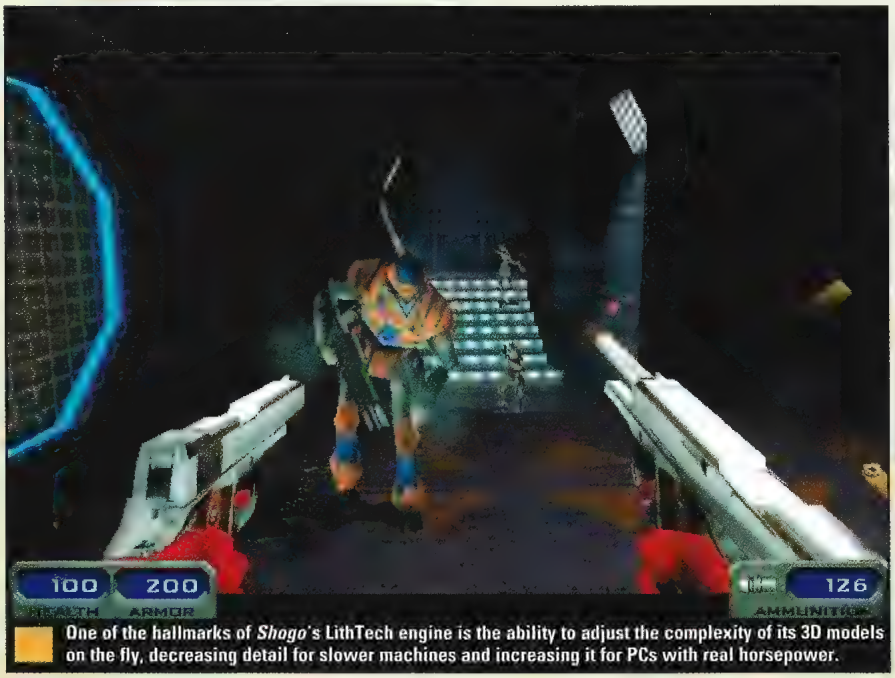
Will a level editor be included?

"Absolutely!" Jack says. "Anyone who buys the game will get the editor for free — we plan to make the editor and related tools available on our web site as a free download, along with sample levels and documentation. We tried to keep the game open-ended enough to allow end-users to modify almost everything that's there." The *Shogo* team has already begun a level design contest on its web site, where eager world-builders can submit their ideas.

And what about going head-to-head with the 3D-engine big boys at Epic and id? Jack is confident that LithTech has the right stuff.

"There are some things that we do better than other engines," he says, "and there are a few things that other engines do a little better than we do. It all comes down to identifying what your technology does best and exploiting that in your game, which has been our main focus with *Shogo*. So I guess for our purposes — and most likely for a lot of other external developers — the LithTech engine is the best 3D game engine available, period."

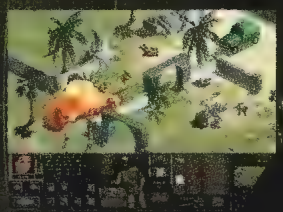
PCG



One of the hallmarks of *Shogo*'s LithTech engine is the ability to adjust the complexity of its 3D models on the fly, decreasing detail for slower machines and increasing it for PCs with real horsepower.

WELCOME TO THE FEEDING GROUNDS

JAGGED ALLIANCE 2



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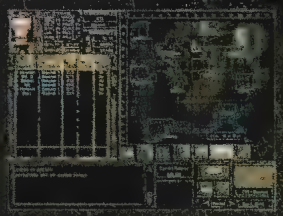

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Homeworld

The real-time revolution marches on

In a pinch, you could call it *TIE Fighter* meets *StarCraft* — this new strategy title adds a third dimension to the real-time genre, and the result could pioneer a whole new genre.

— Jason Bates

In this early look at the game, an attack fleet hones in on a mothership. Some of the models are still untextured in this shot, but the results already look stunning.

FYI — FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Category: Real-time strategy
Developer: Relic Entertainment
Publisher: Sierra, (800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com
Percentage Complete: 50%

In a nutshell:

Relic's debut is a real-time strategy game set in three dimensional space in which the player guides a fleet of colony ships through enemy-held territory to its long-lost, mysterious homeworld. The story and characterization are intriguing, but the gameplay potential is among the best on the horizon.

What's so special?

The incredible graphics of *Homeworld*, mixed with the unique twist on the genre, should make this one to watch. Adding a third dimension to what up until now has been a "flat" genre adds a whole new element to the tactical mix — you'd better get used to thinking in 3D.

And when's it coming out?

Holidays 1998

Back in 1979, television had a rare dose of space opera when a short-lived epic called "Battlestar Galactica" aired on network TV. Fleeing from the tyranny of the Cylons, the mighty starship Galactica was the last of its kind, leading a rag-tag fleet of hammy actors on a hopeless search for a legendary planet known only as Earth. And though the show was cancelled because its budget exceeded its ratings, its influence is still felt amongst the fans of science fiction, many of whom obviously now work in the game industry.

No one has ever actually made a PC game based on "Battlestar Galactica," but the plot of Relic Entertainment's *Homeworld* comes pretty darn close: some where in the future an advanced alien race, the Kushan, is suddenly attacked by a ruthless enemy known only as the Taiidan. Overwhelmed and defeated, the remaining Good Guys are banished to a remote planet in a distant quadrant of the galaxy. But all is not lost, for a mysterious crystal artifact has miraculously escaped destruction, and it contains the secrets of the Kushan's power and the coordinates of their captured capital.

Now, thousands of years later, the Kushan have built a huge mother ship, packed millions of their people into it, and have embarked on a daring gambit — a quest to regain their long-lost homeworld. Upon this epic journey, they encounter pirates, traders, and their hereditary enemies, the Taiidan; you can almost hear the stentorian tones of Lorne Greene narrating during the game's intermission cinematics (cinematics that, incidentally, use the game's engine, not FMV or CGI).

However, what makes *Homeworld* different from say a *Wing Commander* or an *X-Wing* is not its plot but its genre. This is a real-time strategy game, but in 3D; in a pinch you could call it *TIE Fighter* meets *StarCraft*. And though other games of this type have used 3D units or 3D terrain, they are still pretty much ground-based games. But conflict

in space is by definition a three-dimensional affair, and *Homeworld* is one of the first to actually reflect this — and in so doing, makes other recent outings look pretty flat in comparison.

Each mission begins with the mothership warping into a new star system, a necessary stop on its long, winding voyage to the Homeworld. At each stop, resources gatherers are deployed to mine the nebulae and asteroids, collecting enough bounty to build a defensive fleet and power the ship on to its next destination. And in each system, the elements of the Taiidan or pirate fleets must be detected, held off, and ultimately defeated in order for the voyage to continue.

So far this is pretty standard RTS stuff, but actually seeing the game running really drives home what a difference there is when the game is designed for three spatial dimensions from the beginning. Are they above you? Below you? Can a whole squadron do an Immelman? Can you swing some corvettes up over the shoulder and hit them from the back and below? Yes, you can. Taking out the enemy mothership is the way to win; losing your own is the end of the game. Cloaked ships, minefields, and different weapon classes promise to provide the kind of variety of tactics and counter-tactics, ploys and counterploys, that make for great gaming.

Yet while doing a real-time strategy game in 3D sounds good in theory, the interface sounds nightmarish. How do you manage to keep track of your units when the camera moves in six degrees of freedom and can zoom from a large overview all the way down to the exhaust trails on the smallest fighter?

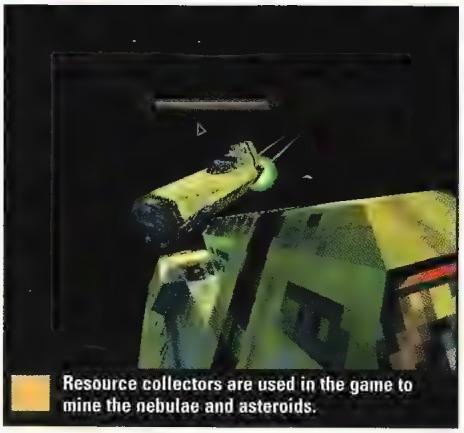
"I can teach you to play in under five minutes," says Alex Garden, CEO of the game's developer, Relic Entertainment. He describes how you control the camera almost entirely with the mouse, with only an occasional tap on the keyboard. "In any game that's 3D, as soon as you stop moving the camera, it's a 2D screen," says Garden. "There's the 'moving the camera' part and there's the 'playing the game' part, though they're seemingly integrated, really they're separate." He says that when you are moving the map to a new point of view, that's all you worry about. And when you are giving your ships new orders, that's a separate process. So even though you switch between the two modes quickly and often in *Homeworld*, getting the hang of switching really is pretty easy. "Once we realized that, the rest of the game was no problem," he says.

So why hasn't anyone done this kind of game before? "I think it's a combination of the fact that computers really weren't up to the task until the last year or so," says Garden. "And the trend has been for real-time strategy games to be 2D and for space combat to be 3D shooters, and I don't think anyone really thought about combining the two," he says, though he adds that there was a similar idea at Bullfrog a year or so ago, but Electronic Arts nixed the project.

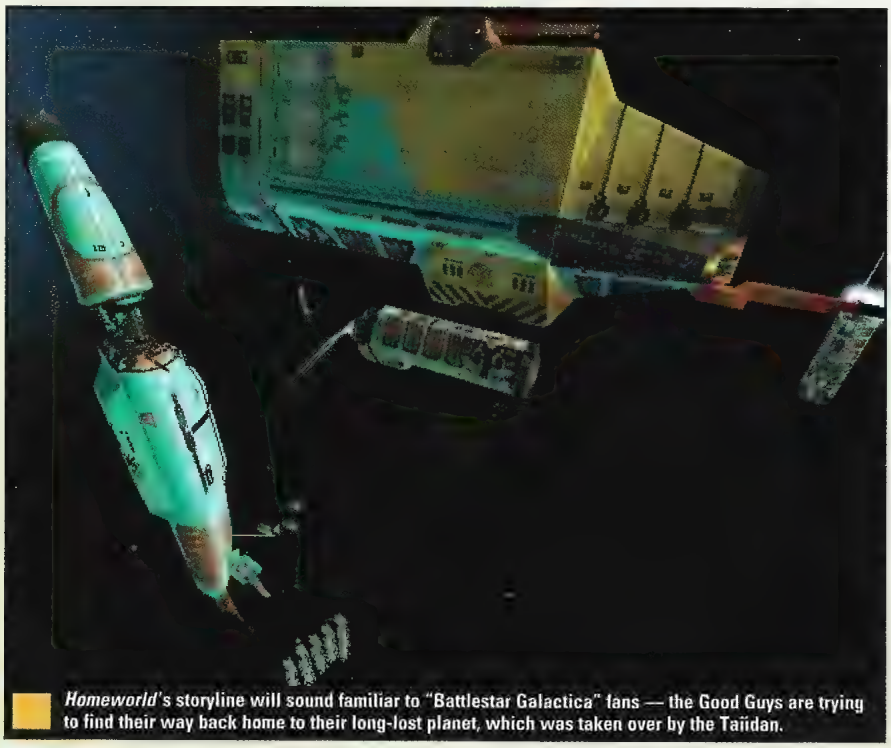
Also noteworthy are the game's sound effects. Relic has created a new audio engine that stitches together unit responses on the fly, rather than defaulting to pre-set WAV files in a directory.

"We have about 7,000 or 8,000 speech fragments," says Garden. The sound engine takes the appropriate bits and pieces — the class of the ship, the maneuver, and a confirmation, for example — and creates unique sentences for the unit responses. The engine also does Doppler effects, 3D sound, and mixes about two dozen channels together. "We're pretty sure it's the most advanced audio engine ever developed for a game," says Garden. "It has a pretty high compression ratio, about eight to one." And since the cinematics are handled by the engine, the actual size of the game in terms of megabytes should be well below average.

Scouts will venture ahead to check out new areas. With its demanding free-floating camera, *Homeworld* will probably be a very resource-hungry game.



Resource collectors are used in the game to mine the nebulae and asteroids.

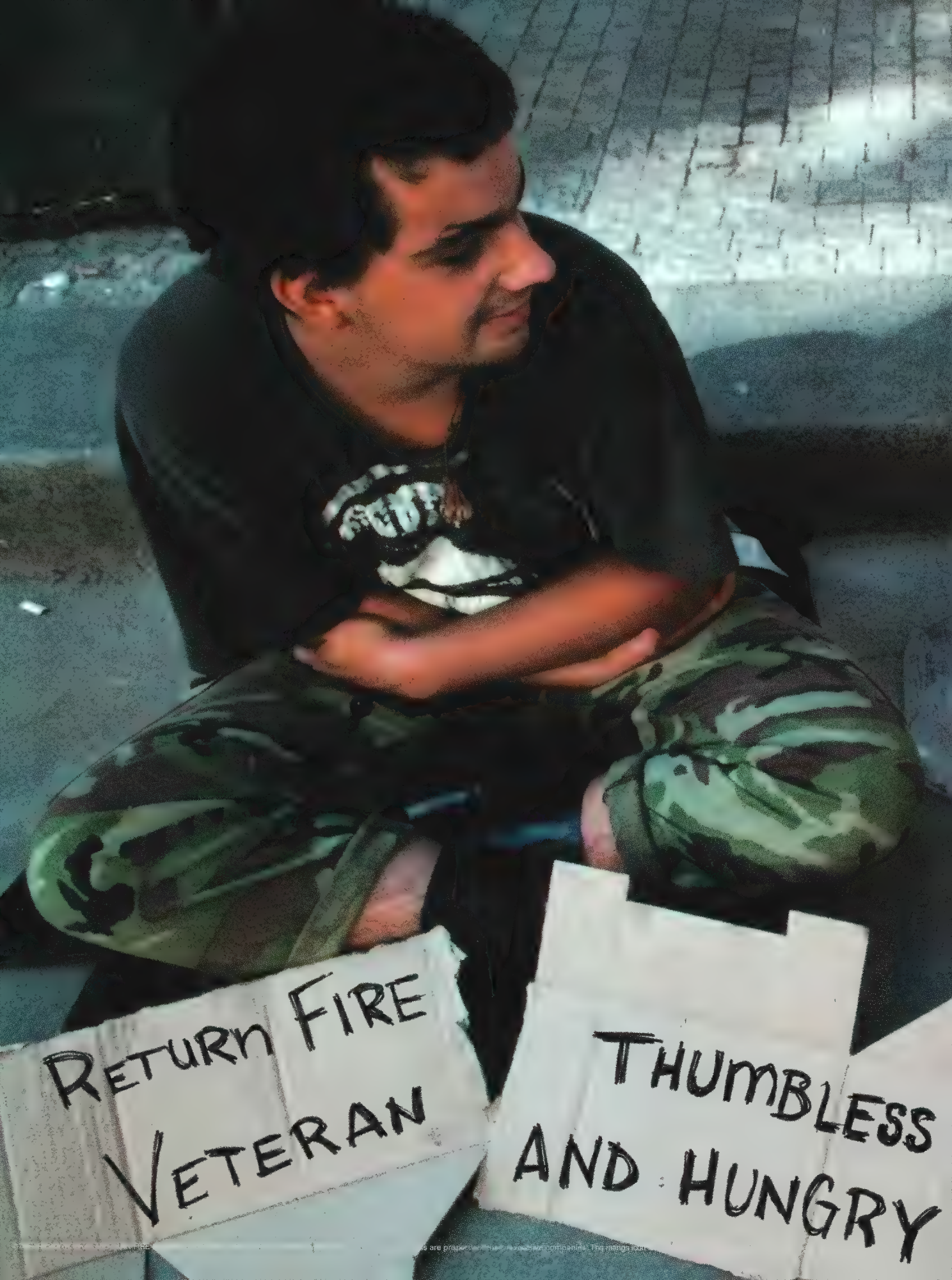


Homeworld's storyline will sound familiar to "Battlestar Galactica" fans — the Good Guys are trying to find their way back home to their long-lost planet, which was taken over by the Taiidan.

Multi-player is important in real-time strategy games of course, and *Homeworld* plans to support up to eight players per game, with matches on Sierra's Won.net free gaming service. Besides the usual free-for-alls, there will also be new game variants such as set piece matches, time-based missions, and the option of turning harvesting on or off, making for many different styles of play.

Homeworld will be the debut release for Relic Entertainment, a company based in Vancouver, Canada — for more about them, check out our Generation Next feature starting on page 139. The title has already whipped the gaming press into a foaming-at-the-mouth frenzy after its impressive showing at E3, and expectations are high for its release this holiday season. Between this and *Half-Life*, Sierra should be in for a very merry holiday season indeed....

PCG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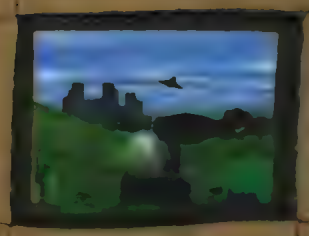

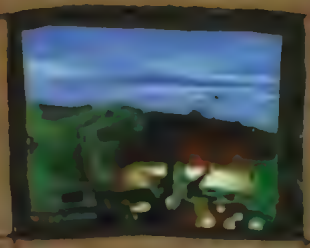

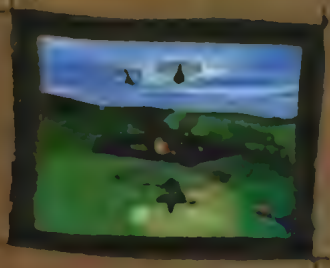

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Redguard

"Arrh" you ready for Bethesda's new pirate adventure?

Buckle up your swash, me hearties, and get ready for some Errol Flynn-type action in Bethesda's new action-adventure. Set in the Elder Scrolls universe, this should be a goodie.

— Colin Williamson

While there's no training mode per se, there's the next best thing — just walk into a tavern and pick a fight with one of the locals. Bar brawls won't cripple Cyrus in the long run, and they're a great way to hone your skills. En garde!

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Category: Action Adventure
Developer: Bethesda Softworks
Publisher: Bethesda Softworks, (800) 677-0700
www.bethsoft.com
Percentage Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

The roleplaying games of the Elder Scrolls series have been good to gamers and to Bethesda Softworks, but the Maryland-based company is leaving the RPG genre behind for this latest game in the Elder Scrolls universe — a beautifully realized action-adventure that's part *Tomb Raider* and part *Monkey Island*.

What's so special?

Whether you're a fan of action-adventures games like *Prince of Persia* or the more traditional adventures like the Monkey Island games, this one may be right up your alley. With 3D sword-swinging action and plenty of adventure-game puzzling, this one promises something for everyone.

And when's it coming out?

October 1998

After *Arena*, *Daggerfall*, and *Battlespire*, Bethesda Softworks is undertaking another game in the Elder Scrolls universe — but this time, it's not going to be another fantasy roleplaying game. Instead, Bethesda is going for a cross-genre title called *Redguard*, which combines the character interaction and extensive story line of the Elder Scrolls games with red-hot action sequences and traditional graphic adventure portions.

The game's lead designer is Todd Howard, whose list of credits include *Terminator: Future Shock* and *SkyNET* (not to mention the invention of the "mouse-look" control scheme standard in today's first-person shooters). Howard explains the rationale behind the game: "What we're trying to do is create a game that feels like a swashbuckling movie in the Elder Scrolls universe, that takes advantage of this world that we think is really cool," he says. "You never got to reach out and touch the people in *Daggerfall* and *Arena*; everybody was sort of generic. In *Redguard*, detail is everything. No two buildings are alike in

Cyrus goes head-to-head with a Boba Fett-like bounty hunter, who's constantly on his trail.

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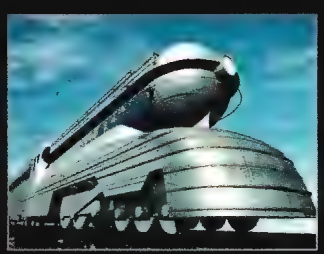
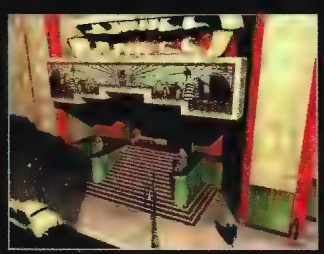

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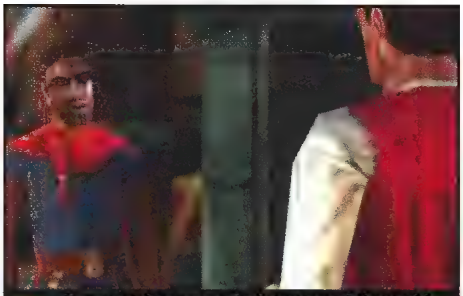

Cyrus catches up on the latest scuttlebutt with his compatriot, Basil. Most cutscenes will be rendered in the game's engine, providing a seamless transition from the gameplay.

our towns, and all of characters have unique names and stories."

Redguard is a prequel to *Daggerfall*, taking place 400 years before that epic RPG. The character you control is named Cyrus, and he's one of the last Redguard mercenaries. As the game begins, Cyrus sails into the Stros M'Kai port to find out what happened to his missing sister — then things start to get out of hand.

"Cyrus doesn't really concern himself with his homeland," says Howard. "All he's concerned about is his sister, but he winds up getting wrapped up in the politics of the island, which includes a band of pirates and an evil empire trying to conquer the world with excavated dwarven technology."

Instead of designing an enormous continent as in the first two Elder Scrolls games, the Bethesda team has opted to put an incredible amount of detail into the island of Stros M'Kai.

"One thing we decided to do was have one city [in the game]," says Howard. "What if we put all the effort we put into *Daggerfall*'s ten thousand cities — that got random and boring — into *one* city? I think it's our biggest achievement."

From what we've seen, he's right — the enormous town includes a massive harbor area where mammoth ships can sail in and out, a market area, and a town square with a more established clientele. Other, secret locations will become accessible as the game unfolds, such as an underground pirate cove and a smaller island infested by the living dead. Time does pass during your visit to Stros M'Kai, and lovely sunsets transition into night, when the town's windows light up.

Landmarks are spread out across the island — but some of them serve as more than memorable sights that help you get your bearings.

"The first time you run through the level, you're like, 'Oh, that stuff's just decoration,'" says Howard. "But when you get to a certain point, you'll say 'Hold on! That really *meant* something.'"

Several inconspicuous buildings may set you off on a series of side-quests, although Howard says they're not necessary to beat the game. Don't worry about getting lost — like all great RPGs, the game will ship with a pirate map. (Howard fondly remembers burning hundreds of *Arena* hint-book pamphlets in the Bethesda basement to give them a proper "aged" look, and says he may unleash his pyrotechnic skills on *Redguard*'s documentation as well.)

As you trek across the island — *especially* at night — you'll run into unscrupulous characters who want your head. To keep the bloodletting enjoyable, combat in *Redguard* is designed to be easy to pick up and play (the development team frequently held tournaments on a Playstation game, *Soul Blade*, to do some "research" into melee-style combat). Overloading the player with a whole slew of fighting moves was something the team wanted to avoid.

"Even though I'm a big *Virtua Fighter* fan, I didn't want to make it like that," says Howard. "That would ask for a certain level of interest — along

Ahrrr, so now it's two against one! Thanks to an arcade-style swordplay mode, you can send multiple opponents packing.

Swashbuckling Games of Olde

***Redguard*'s designers have had a lot of influence from several classic games of yesteryear. Let's check out some of the best swordplay-related games from days of old....**

Here's the Apple II classic sword-fighting game, *Swashbuckler*, in all its four-color glory.

SWASHBUCKLER

In this thrill-packed slash-fest that appeared on the Apple II, you play a swashbuckling hero facing off against an endless wave of fat men with clubs and short guys with pick-axes. The combat system was loosely based on fencing, with an interesting defense system. Even with its outdated four-color graphics and gameplay, it's surprisingly still playable after all these years.

The late, lamented Epyx created *Death Sword*, the first fighting game with fatalities.

DEATH SWORD

This was hack-and-maim action from the now-defunct Epyx. You would beat up fellow barbarians for the love of Princess Paulina, being held captive by a weird green guy. There was confusing control, but my button-mashing would frequently result in my opponent's decapitation, making this the first fighting game with fatalities. Check out the graphics: you're looking at revolutionary 16-color imagery, baby!

Prince of Persia, Jordan Mechner's action-puzzle game, was a genuine masterpiece.

PRINCE OF PERSIA

After the brilliant *Karateka*, ace designer Jordan Mechner set about creating the ultimate Arabian adventure. The evil wizard Jaffar has ruled the land "with an iron fist of tyranny," and only *you* can save the Sultan's beautiful daughter from his grabby clutches. Platform jumping, white-knuckle combat, and four-color "hi-res" graphics — it's a classic!

with wanting to learn combos. I don't think this game is suited for that type of control."

Howard's goal was to give the player a real sense of developing and mastering sword-fighting skills without making control too complex. So *Redguard*'s control layout consists of a key for attack and another for defense, both of which can be combined with directional commands to create different slashes and corresponding parries.

And it wouldn't be a true pirate adventure without ropes to swing on. Cyrus can grab any rope and swing to build up momentum, going higher and higher until he can leap onto a ledge or launch himself through the air to another rope. Howard says *Redguard* includes something he calls the *Dragon's Lair* room — after the classic Laserdisc coin-op machine — where you swing from rope to rope over a pool of bubbling, hot lava.

Still, only twenty percent of *Redguard* will be combat; the real beef of the game is the adventure portion. Several key tasks include starting up some mysterious gnome machinery (including the Grand Observatory, an awe-inspiring room that could easily pass as a 3Dfx technology demo), grilling a cast of more than 30 characters voiced by professional actors, and just being a sneaky person in general — you can talk to people, watch where they go, and follow them. Certain events may trigger cut-scenes, most of which will be handled by the game's engine. For longer storytelling events, Howard's team is opting to use FMV sequences that use the same 3D models used in gameplay, for continuity's sake.

If you want to pick up an object or pull a switch, you won't have to stand directly in front of it; you just go into its vicinity, and a message at the bottom of screen will tell you what you can do. Examining your inventory is an integral part of gameplay — when you choose an object, you can zoom in and rotate a high-detail 3D version of it, and letters and scrolls are easily readable on the 3D pages.

When set in motion, this dwarven observatory becomes an awe-inspiring sight. *We* think it should be a 3Dfx screen saver...

Stumbling upon some ancient ruins, Cyrus is impressed at the native 3Dfx colored lighting effects. Making heads or tails of this ancient technology will keep you in the lead.

In terms of visuals, Bethesda's Xngine has come a long, long way since *Future Shock* — this latest implementation is fully Windows 95-compliant and optimized for 3Dfx. It looks great — and *Redguard* also features something that *Quake* and *Unreal* couldn't pull off — a sprawling outdoor environment. The *Redguard* overworld is a continuous mass of land, and Bethesda says it can be traversed from top to bottom without a second of load time.

Howard's team has also gone above and beyond the call of duty creating custom texture maps.

"We use a lot of 256x256 textures, which makes a lot of developers cringe," says Howard, "but if you're running out of texture memory, it'll scale the larger ones down — so they'll load as 128x128, or 64x64, and you'll get a speed increase."

And gamers without a 3Dfx-based accelerator won't have to sacrifice performance, Howard says, since the software-only game automatically scales down the polygon-count from the 3Dfx version. Howard's personal system is a stock Pentium 200 with a Diamond Monster 3D, and he says the game runs smoothly on it. A Voodoo2-based accelerator will increase the frame rate and makes the textures look a smidgen better. And while most of the effects are supported in software, eye candy such as colored lighting, transparencies, and the like will look brilliant on a 3Dfx card.

But will *Redguard*'s mix of white-knuckle action and engrossing adventure manage to satisfy fans of both genres? Howard thinks so: "I'm a big fan of games like *Archon* and *Star Control II*, games that didn't concern themselves what genre they were in," he says. "They said 'let's do whatever works.' So we have swordfighting along with dialogue and characters and graphic adventure elements. I don't see why we can't have all those things in one game."

PCG

Cyrus realizes that activating angry stone golems tends to be a bad idea. A sword's not going to do you much good here, so our best advice is that you run — fast.

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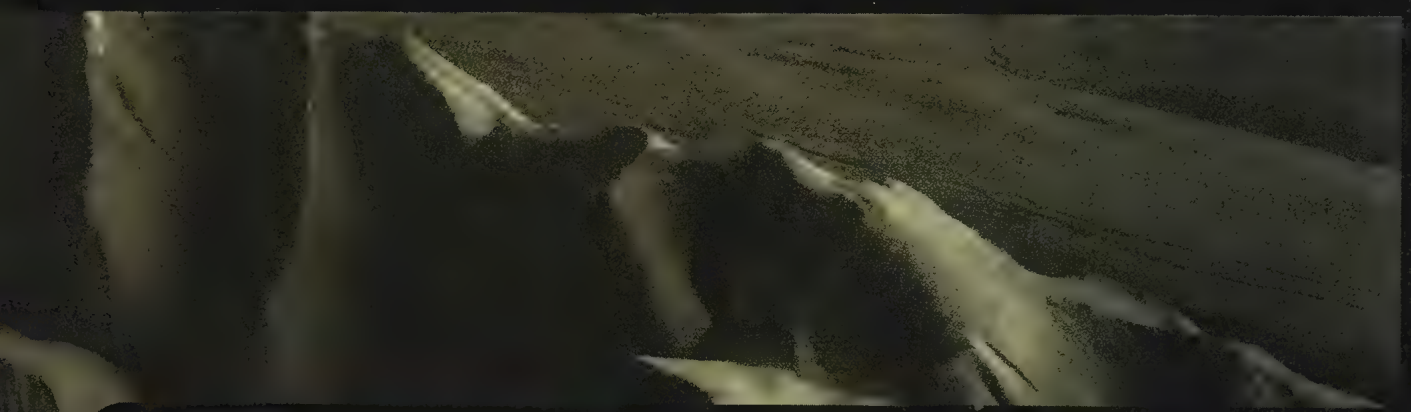

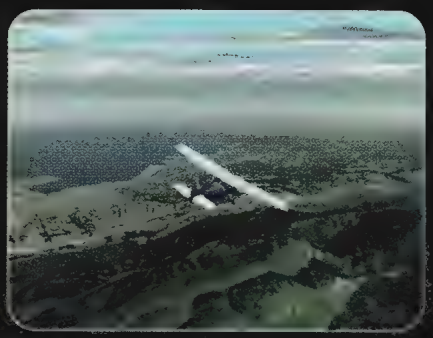

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Trespasser

Kick some dinosaur butt in Dreamworks' *Lost World* actioner!

Sure, killing dinosaurs is something we're all itching to do. But this could also very well be the biggest single advancement in 3D first-person gaming since *Doom* gave way to *Quake*.

— Joel Durham

Them Raptors is hungry, and there ain't nothing they like more than the tangy taste of fresh human flesh! You can fight them off, providing you can find the right kind of weapons.

FYI — FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Category: First-person/adventure
Developer: DreamWorks Interactive
Publisher: DreamWorks Interactive
www.dreamworksgames.com
Percentage Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

Trespasser is a first-person game — but before you start wondering whether it's based on the *Quake II* engine or the *Unreal* engine, think again. Painstakingly crafted from the ground up, the game's advancements just may drop the jaws of gamers everywhere and have developers scrambling to catch up.

What's so special?

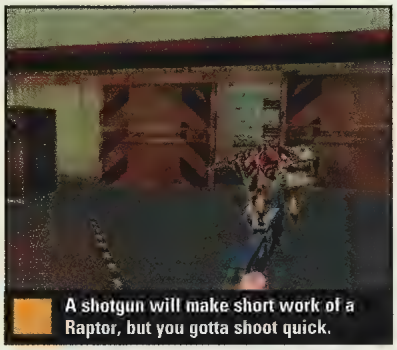
The physics model is on its way toward being closer to reality than anyone's seen in a computer game outside of a flight sim. That should come as no surprise, though, considering that *Trespasser*'s helmed by Seamus Blackley, the former Looking Glass wizard who brought us *Flight Unlimited II*.

And when's it coming out?

October 1998

Outside of military simulations and some sports games, the word "realism" is rarely associated with computer games. Titles in which, rather than strapping into a car or a jet fighter, you're actually controlling what's supposed to be a person, take the most gratuitous poetic license. Look at *Quake*: your persona is able to maintain a constant 40 mph run; he's capable of a four-foot vertical leap; the objects around him are either breakable or totally invulnerable to even the most powerful weapons; and the terrain in his world is broken into three categories: floor, liquid he can swim in, and liquid that hurts. Even as the graphics within the genre advance by leaps and bounds, the realism hasn't increased a bit since *Wolfenstein 3D*.

But that's about to change. *Trespasser* will not be another *Quake* clone. Project Leader Seamus Blackley — the guy who brought forth the acclaimed Flight Unlimited games — and his team have taken a new approach to designing a first-person game. As Blackley put it, "We really wanted to be innovative with gameplay rather than simply competing feature-for-feature with all the other 3D shooters," he says. "It's about fun, not how many colored lights you can have."



A shotgun will make short work of a Raptor, but you gotta shoot quick.

The game is set on the island known as Site B, where most of the *Jurassic Park* movie sequel, *The Lost World*, takes place.

You take the role of Anne, a woman trapped on the island, and you must make your way to safety with only your wits to help you. You're not supposed to be there — but then again, neither are the five-ton dinosaurs. Hence the name: *Trespasser*.

Graphically, everything we've seen of *Trespasser* has been amazing, but visuals haven't been the primary focus for the crew. What sets this impending blockbuster apart from the horde of 3D shooters on the shelves or in development is the world it's set in: it's totally dynamic and ever-changing, thanks in part to an amazingly sophisticated physics engine.

"Austin Grossman (the lead designer) and I have been thinking of doing a game like this for quite some time," Blackley says. "We're both in love with the concept of active worlds, places to explore both geographically and dynamically. Obviously, there are a lot of ways to do this, and physics is only one, but I knew I could write the physics engine, and we both had wads of ideas about using a physical model to set up new kinds of gameplay."

For example, in order to solve puzzles in this game, you can't think in the usual terms of "find the key" or "look for the secret panel." Since every object in *Trespasser* will have real physical attributes — weight, breaking point, center of gravity, and so on — and achieving your goals depends on ingenuity, not on key-hunting. If you want to get into a building that's locked, maybe you can find a rock or a log big enough to beat down the door. Or maybe you can stack up a few barrels and climb on top of them to reach the roof of the building, where you can look for another way in.

You interface with all those objects with Anne's arm and hand, which bends realistically and allows you to manipulate objects with a higher degree of realism than a simple "use" button.

"The main thing about *Trespasser*," says Blackley, "is that there are infinitely many ways to play through it. You can kill a raptor with a shotgun, or with a table leg, or with the whole table, or by dropping or throwing rocks, or by luring it over a drop, or by getting a T-Rex interested in it, or, or, or.... In fact, we expect almost everyone who plays it to come up with at least a few things we never thought of trying. And that means amazing replayability. It also means that you should fear and respect our test department."

Not that you're likely to meet them online. *Trespasser* is being designed as a single-player game. Isn't that a risk, considering the vast popularity of multi-player first-person games? Not according to Blackley.

"I think a lot of that is because a lot of 3D shooters are bad single-player games," he says, "and even really poor games can be tremendously fun for multi-player. Multi-player masturbation, for instance, is really fun — we call it sex.

"Fundamentally, we believed in making *Trespasser* a superb single-player game," Blackley says. "Perhaps you will miss the multi-player element, but not because you're bored; rather because it will become immediately clear to you that there are a lot of sick and clever ways you could set up and kill your friends in such a consistent environment. However, if we do eventually go multi-player, you'll have to wait until at least a few months *after* the release of the single-player game."

If all goes according to Blackley's plan, *Trespasser* will run on even the most conservative machines — within reason, anyway.

"We wanted a game that would look amazing and also be possible to play on real people's machines," says Blackley.

"We've seen great frame rates on the 166MHz systems without sacrificing hardly any of the look of the game (although you'll play at lower resolutions).... We took five machines, a P5 166, 32MB, no accelerator at the low end, and an AGP2X P6 400MHz with a million megs and 400 Voodoo2's at the high end. Then we tweaked out all the literally hundreds of detail settings we have, until the game is worth your money on every one — that's the bottom line." Sounds good to us!

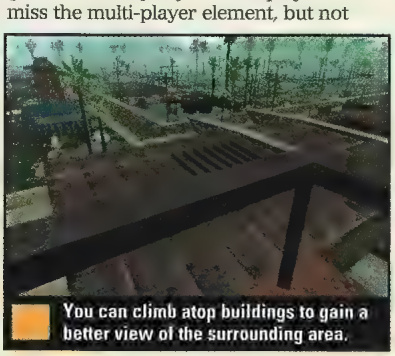
PCG

The proprietary 3D engine developed by Dreamworks for *Trespasser* allows for some stunning views of Site B, the mysterious second island used by InGen to develop its revolutionary dinosaurs.

The dino attacks are accompanied by some incredibly life-like animation.

This Triceratops may not be as fast as a Raptor, but can you imagine putting one of these suckers down with one shot? No, we didn't think so, either.

Just about every object in the game can be manipulated carefully by hand.



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The sequel everybody wanted is here!

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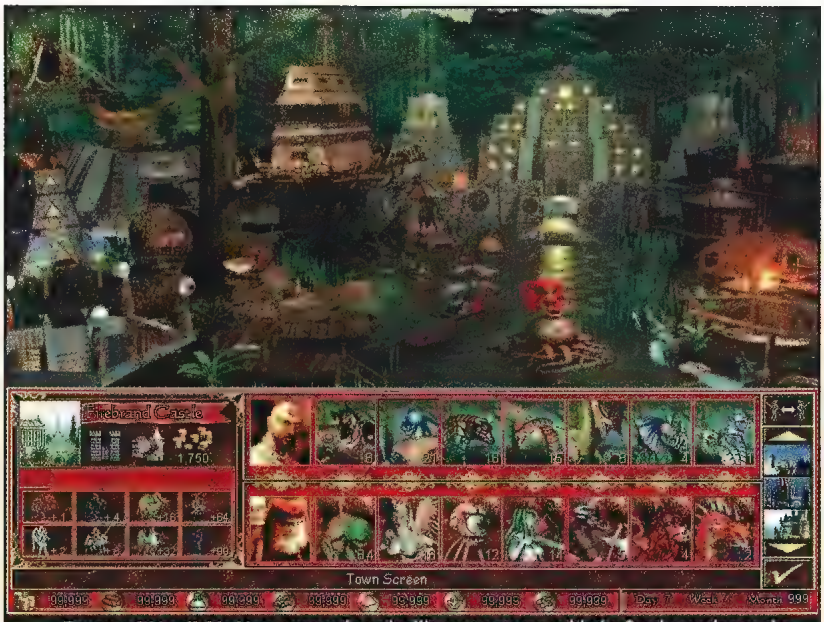
—Chris Charla



Towns will be divided into economic and military structures, with the Castle serving as the military HQ, determining town defenses and which creature generators you can build, and a Town Hall, which allows you to erect buildings and determines your income.

FYI — FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Category: Turn-based strategy
Developer: New World Computing
Publisher: The 3DO Company, (800) 325-8898
www.3DO.com
Percentage Complete: 70%

In a nutshell:

HOMM III is the sequel to the most popular turn-based strategy game in history. It's set in New World's venerable Might and Magic fantasy world, specifically on a rougher continent than we've seen before, Erathia, whose dark forces you must conquer after the death of Queen Catherine's dad.

What's so special?

HOMM II was one of the few games that truly embodied the old cliche, "minutes to learn, a lifetime to master," and the sequel looks set to continue that tradition. The play is easy to get into, the graphics are lush, and the characters will be familiar to anyone who has ever read a fantasy book.

And when's it coming out?

"Before the Holidays"

David Mullich, the Director of *Heroes of Might and Magic III: The Restoration of Erathia*, isn't surprised that Might and Magic is the most popular turn-based series ever. "It's easy to get into, and easy to get out of," he says. "By 'easy to get into' I mean it's easy to learn — you don't have to be a die-hard gamer to understand how to play it — although it is deep enough to satisfy die-hard gamers. By 'easy to get out of' I mean you have the option of sitting down and playing the game during lunchtime. Since *Heroes* is comprised of scenarios of varying length, it's the perfect game to play when you only have an hour available."

Some *HOMM* basics: players control a cast of fantastical heroes and roam the land, taking over and fortifying various towns (each of which produces different types of troops), searching for magical artifacts and engaging enemies in hex-based combat. It sounds simple, and on the surface it is, but the depth of the underlying game balancing is fantastic, and every element has been consciously designed to get players immersed in a fantasy world, instead of having them concentrate on what's happening in a complicated PC game. Explains Mullich: "In combat, for example, most of the monsters are based upon familiar fantasy-mythology, so most players have a good sense going into the game of what their units are capable of," he says. "And we've deliberately made the combat area non-scrollable, so that players can effortlessly assess the battle situation. As far as the combat mechanics go, much of the gameplay has the familiarity of Chess — except that players have the fun of watching a Dragon turn an Orc into a crispy critter."

Heroes II was so well designed, in fact, that even the design team initially had trouble coming up with new ideas for the sequel. "We examined many ways of expanding the *Heroes* universe, only to discover that there was no way to improve upon the way certain things

Magic III

were done originally," says Mullich. "Nevertheless," he continues, "we did find ways of increasing the depth and variety of the gameplay without breaking *Heroes'* fundamental rules."

The biggest addition will be new subterranean areas, which feature new creatures to fight, new artifacts to discover (there are now 128 in all), new environments like tunnels and caverns to explore, and, most excitingly, a new dungeon city. *HOMM III* will feature a total of eight cities, five of which (Castle, Rampart, Tower, Necropolis, and Stronghold) are similar to towns in *Heroes II* (Knight town, Sorceress town, Wizard town, Necromancer town, and Barbarian town, respectively), and three new city types. In addition to Dungeon, there will also be Inferno, a fire and brimstone environment filled with demons and devils and Fortress, which Mullich describes as "a swampland filled with all manner of reptilian beasts." Each town will also feature more buildings and unique structures, including escape tunnels, HabiTrail-type structures (building these requires a special artifact), and creature generators.

Each town type can spawn seven upgradable types of creatures, for a total of 118 unique creatures when you count the two gollumns and four elemental creatures which can be recruited. Many of those 118 creatures will be new — a lot of *HOMM II* characters, like peasants and ghosts, have been discarded in favor of new creatures, some of which sound very exciting. Although there will be several types of dragons, the most powerful creature in the game is likely to be the Archangel. According to Mullich, other interesting new creatures include Pegasus (mounted by a sword-wielding elf), Gremlins (a wizard wanna-be with a ball and chain) Imps, Efreets (from the Fire Plane), Troglodytes (found, of course, underground), Gorgons, and Behemouths (made of living rock).

HOMM III will also feature 16 heroes, one "Might" and one "Magic" type for each city. Castle features the Knight and Cleric, Rampart the Ranger and Druid, Tower the Alchemist and Wizard, Dungeon the Overlord and Warlock, Inferno the Heretic and Daemonick, Necropolis the Death King and Necromancer, Stronghold the Barbarian and Battle Mage, and Fortress the Beastmaster and Witch.

The maps will be even more diverse and beautiful than in previous *HOMM* games.

The battle maps should be familiar to anyone who has played the previous games, but even if you haven't, combat is exceptionally easy to get into — imagine Chess with fantasy creatures, and you've got the idea.

The game is now 800x600, which enables you to see more. The higher resolution also enabled New World to tweak the already solid interface.

But why so many changes to the creature town and heroes list? Well, in an attempt to provide something different to gamers, New World has set this game on an entirely new (and, as it happens, rougher, darker, and more dangerous) continent. "In the campaign game," says Mullich, "our protagonist is Queen Catherine, wife of King Roland from the Might and Magic series. She sails to Erathia to attend her father's funeral, only to discover that evil forces have conspired to use her father's death as a vehicle for overtaking Erathia. Players lead armies in the struggle to restore Erathia to its former glory."

When battle inevitably comes, players will notice that New World has again upped the number of hexes on which to wage it (now 15x11 versus the old 11x9). This enables players to bring bigger armies (consisting of seven creature stacks, versus five for *HOMM II*) into battle. It also allows new obstacles, including magic-created ones, on the battlefield. There are also new combat options, including the ability to have weak units stand and defend, instead of attacking. A new siege machine, the Balista, will join the Catapult, as will first-aid tents and an ammo cart, which gives unlimited shots to shooting creatures. The number of spells has also been upped to 60, fifteen for each of the four elemental schools.

On the technology side, New World has re-done the graphics in pre-rendered 3D, the screen resolution has been upped to 800 by 600 (making fitting in those extra combat hexes easier), and everything is now in 16-bit color. Additionally, the art for the towns is all new, and the combat animations have been redone to take maximum advantage of the new resolution and color depth. Up to eight people can play at once in multi-player mode, and a new alliance feature system enables allies to trade material, but prevents them from attacking each other.

Although some might have expected *HOMM III* to add a real-time mode as everyone else is doing these days, Mullich is content to stay with turn-based play. "*Heroes* is the most popular turn-based strategy game of all time," he says. "Making it real-time would turn it into a different game, and quite possibly a lesser one." Has the tidal wave of real-time games affected the *HOMM III* team at all? "Not really," Mulluch says. "*Heroes* is such a success unto itself; there's very little reason to look to other games or game genres to help define its evolution."

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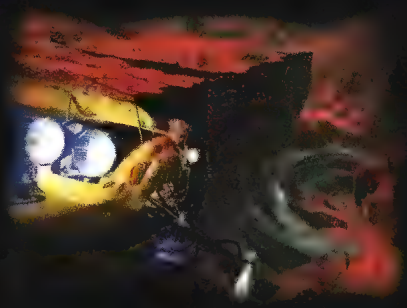

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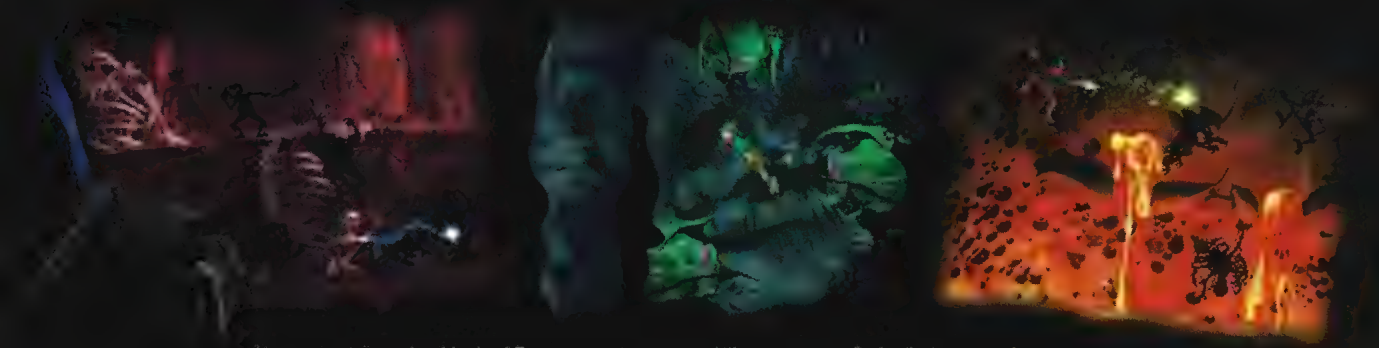

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Aliens Vs. Predator

It's been a long time coming, but it looks to be worth the wait

Yeah, it's been four years, but two hot movie licenses, killer graphics, a stunning 3D engine, and myriad opportunities for multi-player should add up to major-league fun for action fans.

— Stephen Poole

Look at that Predator burn! Translucent flames are part of the many graphical touches that bring the game world to vivid life in *Aliens Vs. Predator*.

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Category: First-person shooter
Developer: Rebellion Development
Publisher: Fox Interactive, (310) 369-5369
www.foxinteractive.com
Percentage Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

Aliens Vs. Predator pits you against two of the most frightening and lethal creatures ever created for the movies — and it also lets you give your dark side free rein by letting you play as the Alien or the Predator. And although it's been in development for around four years, our recent look at the game proves that it should be worth the wait.

What's so special?

Aliens Vs. Predator promises everything an action fan could desire: incredibly detailed 3D characters, three unique and non-linear single-player modes, and the ability to mix and match Marines, Aliens, and Predators for multi-player match-ups unlike anything else out there.

And when's it coming out?

Early 1999

Just like millions of other movie-goers in the summer of 1979, I really didn't know what to expect as I settled into my seat to watch *Alien*. I'd heard good things about it, but I'd been burned by misleading movie reviews many times before, and as the movie began, I couldn't help but wonder if I'd be cursing the flick as a waste of time and money as I left the theater.

A little less than two hours later, I walked into the humid night with the image of one of the most horrific creatures ever seen in a film indelibly etched into my brain. *Alien* had delivered the goods, all right, and in the process Ridley Scott and artist H.R. Giger — the man who designed the face-huggers, chest-burster, and the Alien itself — created a look and feel that's still influencing filmmakers even today. As much as I liked *Alien*, though, there was still one thing that bothered me: the crew of the *Nostromo* wasn't able to put up much of a fight. Yes, they did the best they could, but what I *really* wanted to see was how the Alien would fare against humans who were armed to the teeth and ready for a fight.

Of course, my wish came true in 1986 with the release of *Aliens*, a film that combines the very best elements of horror, science-fiction, and war movies. It's a roller-coaster ride that goes full-bore from start to finish, with memorable characters, unforgettable dialogue, and gut-churning combat action — and over the years, it's developed legions of die-hard fans.

You can team up with friends in cooperative mode and play as either a Marine, an Alien, or a Predator. I know I wouldn't mind a little backup if I got this close to a Predator...

You'd be hard-pressed to find another movie that's as well-suited for conversion into a PC game as the Alien films (except for that third flick), but with the exception of *Aliens Online* (see sidebar), the few attempts that have been made have been unsatisfying, to say the least. That's set to change this winter, though, with the long-awaited release of *Aliens Vs. Predator* from Fox Interactive, a game that not only lets you play as a Colonial Marine or an Alien but also has the added oomph of the Predator, a Giger-esque creature that garnered its own set of fans thanks to two hit movies.

The proprietary 3D engine created for *Aliens Vs. Predator* uses a particle system to render flame, blood, and smoke. Tag an Alien with a few rounds from a pulse rifle, and you'll see the creature's acid blood hit the wall — and *you*, if you're not careful.

The *Aliens Vs. Predator* PC game was first announced back in 1994, around the time the Atari Jaguar videogame system was set to ship with its own version of *Aliens Vs. Predator* as its flagship title. But we all know what happened to the Jaguar, and it didn't take long before gamers forgot there was even supposed to be a PC version of the game.

But according to David Stalker, the producer for *Aliens Vs. Predator*, the plans for the game never really died.

"It's been a desire to create an entirely new *Aliens Vs. Predator* game ever since the Jaguar game debuted," says Stalker. "Porting the Jaguar game to the PC was never part of the plan — we wanted an all-new game based on the combination of the Aliens and Predator universes. However, the development team — Rebellion Developments, which is based in the U.K. — *is* the same one that developed the immensely popular Jaguar game."

"Jumping, leaping, biting, climbing, while other people are stuck to the ground — it's incredibly entertaining."

—DAVID STALKER, GAME PRODUCER

The back story for *Aliens Vs. Predator* takes its cue from the basic premise of the Aliens movies. While researching new life-forms to see how they can best be exploited, scientists allow an Alien to escape inside Pandora Base — and to make matters worse, a Predator's also been released thanks to a fouled-up security system. When you play as a Marine, your mission is to locate data tapes that will allow you to destroy the base in order to prevent the aliens from escaping and wreaking havoc on other worlds. At your disposal are all your favorite weapons: pulse rifle, shotgun, smart gun (a machine gun that's self-targeting and fires 50 rounds per second; it's the big-ass gun Vasquez and Drake carry in *Aliens*), rocket launcher, plasma gun, and a grenade launcher.

That's a lot of firepower, but these are some pretty special enemies you face. It's one thing to unload 10 or 15 rounds from your pulse rifle into an alien, and quite another to do it without being splashed by the critter's acid-blood.

"The acid from stricken Aliens is deadly and will scar and damage the environment as well as yourself," says Stalker, "and when you shoot Predators, they leave gobs of luminous, fluorescent blood on the floor and walls — and you can see bullet holes in their bodies that are luminous, too."

As an Alien, you don't have weapons in the conventional sense — but you do have the ability to spit acid, use your claws and tail, climb on any surface (including ceilings), and move at lightning speed. Predators are able to cloak (by blending into the environment) and become essentially invisible; they can cycle through different visual frequencies to easily spot enemies in low-visibility situations; and they're armed with throwing disks, wrist-blades, a rifle, a pistol, and a shoulder-mounted plasmacaster (no, that's not the late Wendy O. Williams' guitar).

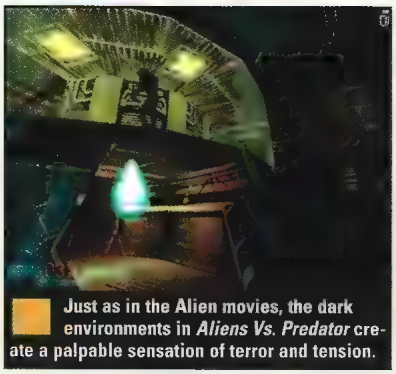
What it all adds up to is three games in one, each with its own unique set of challenges and appeal — which also makes for an almost limitless variety of multi-player modes. *Aliens Vs. Predator* uses DirectPlay, which means all the usual multi-player modes — serial link, mode-to-modem, LAN, and Internet play — will be supported, but Stalker says that no decision has been made as to whether the game will be supported on a gaming network such as Mplayer or TEN or on dedicated servers.

In addition to special multi-player maps, players can also team up in co-op mode and take on the single-player levels together. But most gamers will want to go head-to-head — a team of Aliens versus a team of Marines, for instance — and while it may not be something most gamers will want to do, you can even mix and match species on the same side.

"It's absolutely possible to set things up however you want to," Stalker says. "Alpha Team could consist of any mix of Aliens, Marines, and Predators, and so could Bravo Team — but the difficulty with that is that it becomes impossible to tell who's on your team and who isn't: is that *my* Alien or *their* Alien? But we've

It's been nearly four years since the PC version of *Aliens Vs. Predator* was originally conceived, but if the graphical detail in this screen shot is any indication, the time in development has been spent wisely.

Aliens can walk on walls and the ceilings, but because your motion tracker only displays two dimensions, you'll have to keep your eyes peeled to find out just where they're really lurking.



Just as in the Alien movies, the dark environments in *Aliens Vs. Predator* create a palpable sensation of terror and tension.

THE ROCKY ROAD FROM SILVER SCREEN TO THE PC

Given the popularity of the Alien movies, you'd think someone would have already created a first-rate PC game based on the license. But there have been only a handful of titles based on either the Alien or Predator movies, and of those only one even comes remotely close to recreating the intense action and spine-tingling suspense that made those flicks so popular.

Because the creators of the *Aliens Quake* conversion didn't ask for permission to use copyrighted materials, about the only evidence that it ever existed is a handful of screen shots like this one — which only serves to prove it probably wasn't worth the download time anyway.

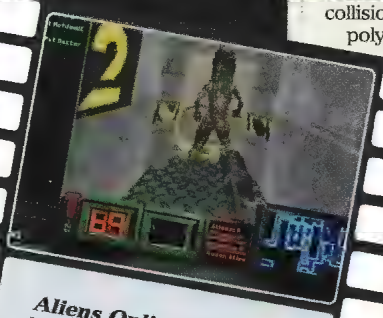
Surprisingly, the first appearances of Aliens on the PC didn't come from a big company, but rather from *Doom* fans who created conversions based on their favorite science-fiction movie. *Alien Doom*, *Aliens Doom*, and *Aliens Total Conversion* were the most popular, and there's no doubt they helped add to *Doom's* long shelf-life. If you're still playing the granddaddy of all first-person shooters you can find most of these conversions at the Mr. Doom Wad Page (*http://mrdoom.erie.net/mrdoom/dehacked.html*). There have also been Alien conversions for *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake*, but because the conversions used copyrighted material without permission, they've pretty much been pulled off the 'net, with only a few screen shots remaining online.

The first true Alien game to arrive for the PC was the intriguing *Aliens: A Comic Book Adventure*, published by Mindscape and developed by Cryo. Alien fans around the world eagerly awaited this game because it drew heavily on the art and characters from Dark Horse Comics' Aliens series, but gamers looking for action were sorely disappointed to find out that the game was simply a graphic adventure — and a pretty bad one, at that, thanks to wretched voice acting, rotten dialogue, and frustrating, ill-conceived puzzles.

Next up was Acclaim's *Alien Trilogy*, a PC port of a PlayStation title. The game's extremely pixelicious graphics alone were enough to dissuade most PC game fans from buying it, and the unlucky ones who did take the plunge discovered a primitive game engine that didn't allow for the sort of stuff everyone had to come expect in a first-person shooter; the lack of in-game saves and the ability to jump and crouch, plus "deathmatches" that consisted of competing to see who could shoot the most company synthetics, were just a few of the game's shortcomings. If ever a hit movie license was wasted, it was in *Alien Trilogy*.

But Alien fans were soon able to wash the sour taste of *Alien Trilogy* from their mouths, thanks to Kesmai's multi-player games network, GameStorm. Around November of 1997, GameStorm began an online beta test (which is still in progress as we go to press) of *Aliens Online*, a first-person shooter and strategy game that has the distinction of giving PC players their first opportunity to play as either a Colonial Marine or an Alien.

The graphics in *Aliens Online* aren't exactly state-of-the-art, and even after months of beta testing, the game still isn't "live," but what it lacks in visual appeal it more than makes up for with solid gameplay that puts a premium on teamwork and tactics — and the ability to do a little shredding as an Alien or face-hugger. You have the option to play alone, but you aren't able to win fireteam commendations (as a Marine), and the chances of death skyrocket astronomically if you head into battle solo. Aliens fans have nothing to lose by checking out *Aliens Online* — at least until *Aliens Vs. Predator* hits shelves, that is.



Aliens Online might not boast the most advanced graphics you've seen in a shooter, but a loyal community of gamers and the ability to plays as either Marine or Alien make it fairly addictive.

got some really good ideas about how to make this work and feel right."

Stalker says another big challenge in the game's development has been play balance.

"The major ongoing challenge in working on *Aliens Vs. Predator* has been to come up with not only a great first-person 3D game," he says, "but also one in which the three different styles of play are equally balanced and satisfying — *and* make you feel like you really are an Alien, a Marine, or a Predator."

Naturally, there's always the question of just how many gamers will choose to play as an Alien or Predator — the allure of taking on the role of your favorite Marine from *Aliens* is always present — but Stalker says that once gamers try out the various perspectives, they'll find them fun, too.

"Playing as the Alien is tons o' fun because it's a totally different experience in this type of game," Stalker says. "Jumping, leaping, biting, climbing, while other people are stuck to the ground — it's incredibly entertaining. You know the Alien point-of-view bits in *Alien 3*? That's what you do in this game. And turning invisible and picking off your victims from their heat signals as a Predator is magic fun. But deep down, I always fancied myself as Hicks, so it feels good to have a pulse rifle in hand."

Topping all this off are some of the most delicious graphics we've seen in a first-person game: take a good look at the screen shots here; a picture really is worth a thousand words. And the proprietary 3D engine that Rebellion created for the game seems very powerful.

Stalker says that the "the particle and decal system can support up to 5,000 individually lit particles on-screen at any one time — and the results are fantastic when you set people and things on fire with the flamethrower!"

All surfaces can be damaged by bullets, acid, and flames; full-motion video can be streamed on-screen during play to communicate vital info to the player; a collision model that responds to each polygon that makes up a 3D character (rather than one big bounding box) make for eye candy such as dynamic water that ripples as you move through it; and lights are not only rendered in real time, but also flicker and strobe (and can be shot out).

What will you need to enjoy all this? Stalker says the game should run on a P166 and higher, but he recommends as fast a machine as possible (naturally) with a 3Dfx Voodoo2-based accelerator.

And if you don't have such a system, the combination of falling chip prices and the arrival of what could well be one of the hottest first-person games of the year might be enough to convince you it's time for an upgrade. After all, how often do you get the chance to leap from a ceiling and bite into someone's skull? PCG

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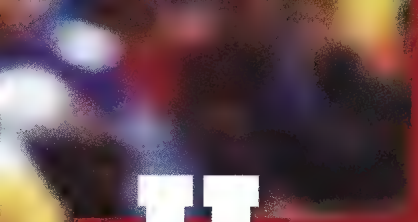

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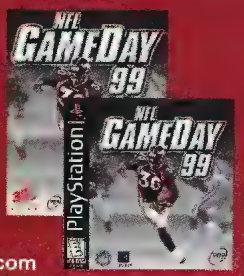

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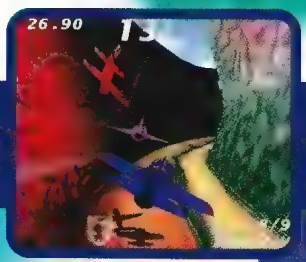

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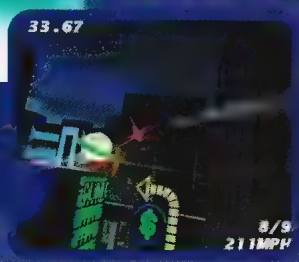
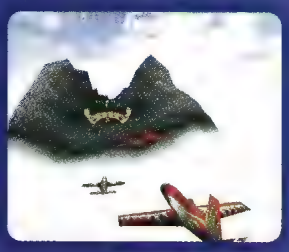
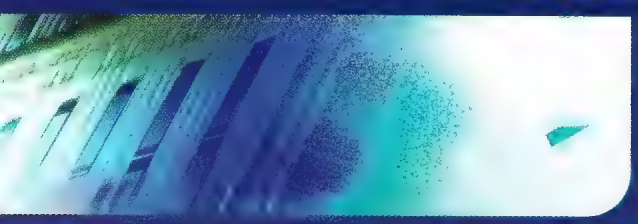


Buy equipment and tune your plane's performance.



Sonic cannon accesses short cuts and creates obstacles.



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Going for the Green

Six new games are after your PC golfing dollar

It's a great time to be a PC golfer — a half-dozen new golfing games from five different companies are scheduled to hit store shelves over the next few months, aimed at a wide audience. Whether your tastes run to simple, arcade-style play or you're looking for a full-fledged simulation, there's a title coming out with your name on it.

Peter Jacobsen's Golden Tee Golf

If you've been to an arcade or even a neighborhood bar within the past couple of years, chances are you've seen a *Golden Tee Golf* machine. And now, thanks to Incredible Technologies, you no longer have to rub shoulders with snot-nosed kids and cranky alcoholics to enjoy this popular game.

Golden Tee's trackball swing system has been converted to use the PC mouse to good effect. Using three positions on your mouse pad, any shot from a slight draw to a huge slice can be performed easily. The graphics are very colorful and include effects such as fog, reflections, and shadowing. The three courses offer a good range of playing environments (traditional country club, seaside links, and a desert course), and many more are promised for the future.

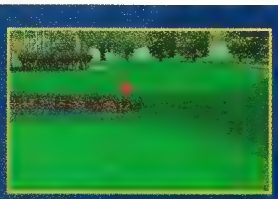
This being an arcade game, it's very easy to get into, and the PC version adds five skill settings to up the challenge if you're having too easy a time. We've been playing a near-finished version in the *PC Gamer* office, and, for a game with arcade roots, *Golden Tee* impressively boasts ball flight and roll that's as good or better than most other games claiming to be accurate simulations.

Multi-player options include an Internet matchmaking service called Golden Tee Net, LAN, modem, and as many as four players on the same PC.

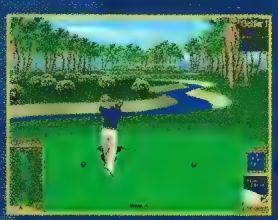
If realistic play is your main concern, you might not be happy with the simplified mechanics and sometimes comical aspects. But if you want a fun, easy to learn game that won't tax your system, this could be the one for you. *Golden Tee* should be available in stores by the time you read this, and we'll have a full review next issue.

Peter Jacobsen's Golden Tee Golf

Desert Sands...the name says it all. Try not to get too close to those cacti.



Pine Creek Country Club offers some tricky holes with lots of pretty landscaping.



The ocean provides a great setting for this par 3 at Coral Reef.

Pro 18: World Tour Golf

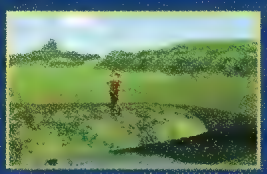
Aimed at the serious golfer, *Pro 18*'s accurate physics model will try to immerse the player in the world of professional golf. The alpha-test version that we saw indicates that Psygnosis is well on its way to achieving that goal so far.

The impressive player list includes Tom Lehman, Colin Montgomerie, Ian Woosnam, Vijay Singh, Jesper Parnevik, recent Masters and British Open champion Mark O'Meara, Dottie Pepper, and Laura Davies. The three courses are Northern Ireland's Royal County Down, South Africa's Lost City Golf Course, and our very own Coeur d'Alene, located in Idaho. Peter Alliss and Bobby Clampett of CBS will

Pro 18: World Golf

The last part of the swing will be your wrist action as you strike the ball. The lower meter will tell you how well you've done.

To be able to make shots like this at the professional level, you'll need a steady hand and a strong knowledge of swing mechanics.



The graphics are a strong point of *Pro 18*, with lovely water reflections and solid motion captures of the golfers.

provide the commentary.

Psygnosis is placing a great deal of emphasis on the gameplay and physics engine. The swing meter will have a four-click control method. It's not really a click, but more of a release at the bottom of the swing. This will simulate your wrist action through the swing. Even in the early stages of production, the ball physics looked very accurate. One member of the design team is assigned to nothing but getting the feel of the ball flight and roll absolutely perfect.

The photo-realistic graphics are quite stunning and immersive, with weather having an effect on play, and the sun changing position as the round progresses. In tournaments, the TV-style presentation will even feature the crowds responding to other action happening around the course. Multi-play allows for as many as four players over a LAN, as well as modem play.

Pro 18 may find a home on the hard drives of serious golf gamers, thanks to its dedication to accuracy. It's going to be facing some pretty stiff competition, but there should be enough unique elements in the game to warrant a second look when it's released in November.

Tiger Woods 99 PGA Tour Golf

There's no mistaking who the headliner is in this year's version of the PGA Tour series from EA Sports — just look at the title! Whereas previous PGA Tour games gave equal billing to all its licensed stars, this time the other eight professionals seem more like a supporting cast. Tiger fans are certainly going to be pleased at the reverential treatment afforded him, but will the rest of the PC golfers find enough to hang their hats on?

The new 3D engine should turn a few heads for sure. With various camera angles and a roving camera that follows your ball in flight, *Tiger Woods 99* looks absolutely gorgeous (this is an EA Sports title, after all). 3D accelerators will be supported, and the software mode can produce resolutions as high as 1600x1200 in 16-bit color.

The three included courses are Pebble Beach, TPC at Sawgrass, and the TPC at Summerlin; the game will also be backwards compatible with previous PGA Tour courses. Two course discs will be available at launch; *The Tournament Courses* (Colonial Country Club, Bay Hill, and Cog Hill) and *The TPC Courses* (Las Colinas, Southwind, and Scottsdale). A third disc, *The Vegas Courses*, will be available shortly after the game's release.

EA is obviously determined to get the most out of its ultra-expensive star license — the game is loaded with Tiger references. Tiger Tips will help you when facing tough shots, and Tiger Vision refers to how aggressive or safe you want to play a shot (and if you choose to be more aggressive, you will, of course, be in the "Tiger Zone"). If you're playing against a computer-controlled Tiger, he'll gain momentum after scoring well on a hole — better known as the Tiger Charge. If you don't have a soft spot in your heart for the Boy-Bengal, it may all seem a bit overwhelming.

The gameplay will offer a choice of three-click or mouse swing (although not in real time) and nine play modes. Multi-play will include Internet, LAN, and modem options. The finished Tiger-title should be on Tiger-shelves this Tiger-fall.

PGA Championship Golf, 1999 Edition

Sierra's *Front Page Sports: Golf* was one of the first golf titles to deliver a quality mouse swing while also incorporating 3D players into the graphics engine. The latest version, from newly-branded Sierra Sports, will be called *PGA Championship Golf*, and will build upon the strong base already established by its successful predecessor.

The most exciting new feature is the course architect. Unlike the latest Jack Nicklaus game's designer, this one treats the course as a single entity, rather than a collection of holes. There will be plenty of templates available to assist you and a large selection of objects such as trees, animals, and structures. Sierra will also provide a tool to create your own objects on its web site, and there should be a wide variety of additional courses available for downloading shortly after its release.

The mouse-meter, or True-Swing, as it's called, will be further refined in this year's version, offering more precise control, and the 3D golfer will have 400 unique motions, giving your on-screen avatar much more personality and realistic movement.

The 3D environments look

Continued on page 72:
See Going for the Green

Tiger Woods 99 PGA Tour Golf

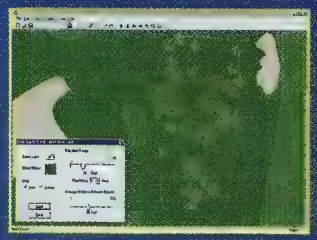
Tiger's every movement has been motion-captured to make you feel as if you're really out there on the course with him.

Tiger...in the rough? There must be a bug in the game!

A good selection of courses will be available when *Tiger Woods 99* ships.

PGA Championship Golf 1999 Edition

The graphics in *PGA Championship Golf* should stand up very well against its competitors. Just look at that reflection in the water.



The course architect will be very powerful and flexible, letting you do things like set varying heights of this group of trees.

When playing in a tournament, don't let the galleries throw off your game.

Continued from page 71:
See **Going for the Green**

very attractive, and the ball physics seem accurate. When competing with other players, the game uses a real-time model, mimicking realistic play. Instead of the normal turn-based system used in other games, *PGA Championship Golf* allows you your own perspective when playing a remote game. Each player will follow his or her own ball, hacking his or her way toward the green at his own pace. Of course, common golf courtesy should still be observed when another player is taking a shot, but this method should speed things up.

A couple of big name courses have been converted for use here, including Sahalee Country Club in Redmond, WA (site of the 1998 PGA Championship) and Royal Birkdale in England, where this year's British Open was held. Five other courses will be included, and the Sierra Sports Golf Association (SGA) on Won.net will support tournament play over the Internet when the game is released this October.

Links LS 1999

When it comes right down to it, no other golf series is as highly regarded as Access' Links — and for good reason. Sure, other games may offer more features (like course editors, for example), but for the ultimate golfing experience on your PC, this is still the best. Gorgeous graphics, a large selection of add-on courses and the best execution of gameplay and ball physics made the last iteration, *Links LS 98*, the connossieur's choice. And though *Links LS 1999* will again be from the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" school, there should be enough new additions to make it worthy of a place on your "must have" list.

Heading up the list of new items will be the Power-Stroke mouse swing. This is the first time that Links has used a mouse-swing control method, and Access is convinced that its approach will be the most authentic yet. In fact, one of the reasons why it's taken so long for this swing method to make it into Links is that it has taken four years of fine tuning to get it just right. The classic two-click and three-click swing methods will also be included.

The new graphics engine is looking just as sweet as ever, and for the first time, 3D objects will be found on the course. This is a preliminary step in preparation for the course editor that will be part of the 2000 version. Most importantly, the new engine will be able to do justice to the treacherous pot-bunkers found at The Old Course at St. Andrews. The other new courses include Bay Hill, Entrada, and a new version of Latrobe showing the course in its full autumn bloom.

Other highlights include more than 25 modes of play, including an editor that lets you design your own scoring systems and game types, real-time voice chat and spectator mode on the Internet, and a much more immersive tournament mode with galleries and leader boards.

Future add-ons to *Links LS 1999* will bring more courses (Phoenix in Japan is already being worked on), and new professional golfers to the mix; Fred Couples and Fuzzy Zoeller are two that have been announced so far.

Every new version of *Links* has only improved upon what was already an excellent game and all the signs point to yet another leap ahead when Access graces us with *Links LS 1999* this September.

Links Extreme

If you're of the opinion that golf, in general, and the Links LS series in particular, take themselves much too seriously, you might have to re-evaluate your position when you see *Links Extreme*. This golf game with attitude is out to show how much fun you can have on a golf course, with your stroke total being more of an afterthought.

With plenty of cheats and pranks to pull on your fellow players, you can engage in "Deathmatch Golf" using exploding golf balls on courses such as Mojo Bay or Dimension X, a course with a World War One theme.

Access is keeping a lot of the details under its hat for now, not wanting to spoil the surprises in store for when the game is released later this fall. What we do know is that you'll never look at golf in quite the same way after experiencing the nutty side of this usually staid sport.

Links LS 1999

If you thought *Links LS 98* was pretty, the graphics in this year's version may just bring a tear to your eye.

The bunkers at St. Andrews are not for the timid. This course gives new meaning to the phrase "keep it on the short stuff."

No golf game, before or since, has had a better putting engine than the Links LS series.

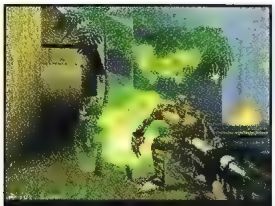
OH MY GOD! They Licensed Kenny!

Details of two new "South Park" games emerge

Everybody knows that Acclaim has snapped up the PC rights to everyone's favorite foul-mouthed construction paper cartoon series, but the details of what the company actually planned to do with the license have been sketchy indeed — Acclaim's *South Park* presentation at this year's E3, for instance, was limited to showing footage from the TV show, with nothing to see of the game itself.

The two "South Park" games will be a shooter and an adventure.

But now the company has finally taken the wraps at least partially off its new star property, and the main news is that there are not one but two "South Park" games in the pipeline — obviously, Acclaim is serious about getting its money's worth out of this no-doubt expensive license.



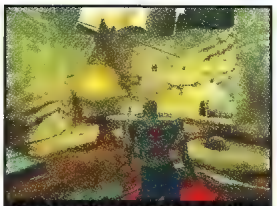
Turok 2 will feature plenty more dinosaur-bashing antics, and an impressive new 3D engine.

The first game should appear early next year, and will be a first-person shooter centering around a snowball fight between the "South Park" kids. Developer Iguana will be using its new *Turok 2* engine, so expect some fancy graphics.

The second game will be a graphic adventure entitled *A Week in South Park*. In this effort from developer Dreamforge, you'll get to control all four of "South Park"'s main characters. That's about all the details that have emerged so far, except that Acclaim is promising not to dilute the content of the games — both titles are being aimed at an "adult audience." And no doubt Kenny will be killed several times, too.

Meanwhile, Acclaim will also be putting the new *Turok 2* engine through its paces in, er... *Turok 2*. Subtitled *Seeds of Evil*, this sequel to the popular original will once again have you running around lush 3D worlds and blasting dinosaurs for all you're worth. The new engine will definitely help improve the game's look (a 3D card will be required), and there'll be no fewer than 24 (count 'em!) weapons with which to dish out the hurt to those blood-sucking lizards. *Turok 2* is due to arrive later this fall.

Also this fall from Acclaim is *Shadow Man*, a third-person action adventure in, yes, the *Tomb Raider* vein, with the player in charge of a supernaturally pumped-up hit man who must use a combination of conventional and black magic weapons to kill the undead scumbags who stand in his way. Sporting a dark, comic-book feel and "demonically possessed serial killers" (how many games can offer *that*, eh?), *Shadow Man* looks like one of Acclaim's more interesting upcoming titles.



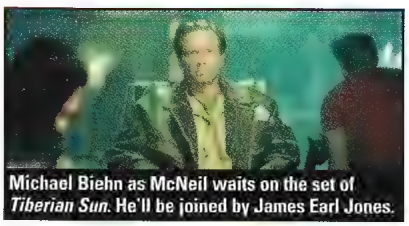
Shadow Man promises a gritty story line that shifts between the Earth and the underworld.

Alias Biehn and Jones

Westwood adds acting clout to Tiberian Sun

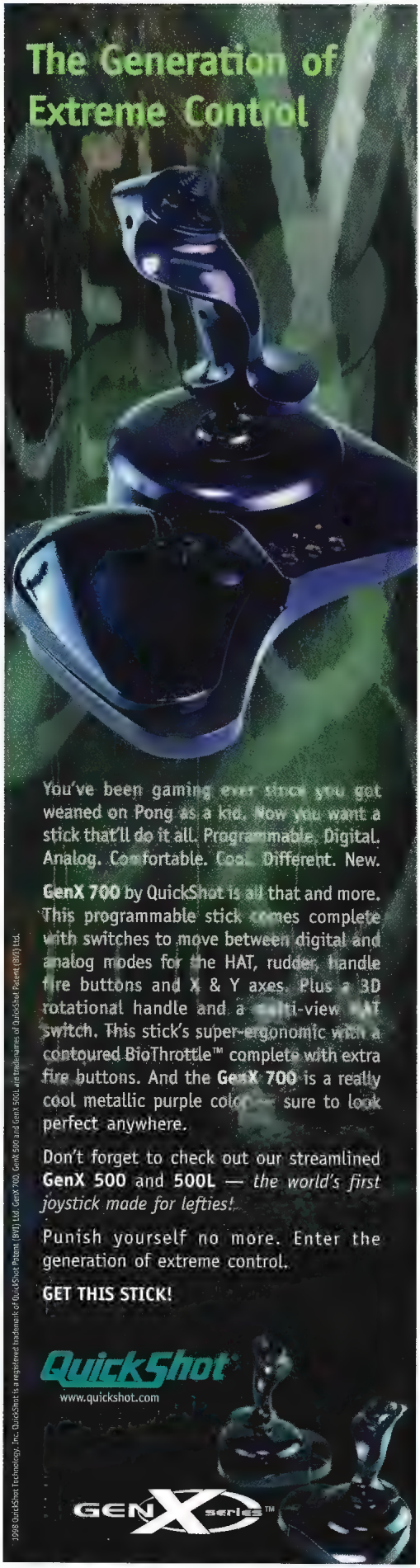
The cinematic sequences of Westwood's *Command & Conquer* sequel *Tiberian Sun* are set to be spiced up by appearances from two well-known Hollywood actors — Michael Biehn and James Earl Jones have both signed onto the project.

Jones, who we all know and love as the voice of Darth Vader, will star as GDI commander General Solomon, while Biehn, a veteran of such movies as *The Terminator* and *Aliens*, appears as McNeil, the story's hero and the player's alter-ego character — he'll also provide voice-over hints and cues to help the player during the game. And, yes, Kane is back too — but he's not quite his old self....



Michael Biehn as McNeil waits on the set of *Tiberian Sun*. He'll be joined by James Earl Jones.

Westwood says that *Tiberian Sun* is still on target for release before the end of the year, and that should give real-time fans plenty reason to be cheerful this holiday season.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The first official mission pack for Ritual's *SiN* will include 13 new levels.

Adding to the Original *SiN*

First mission pack has already been announced

Talk about counting your chickens — Ritual Entertainment's long-awaited 3D shooter *SiN* hasn't even made it to store shelves yet (at the time of writing), but publisher Activision has already announced details of the first official add-on pack.

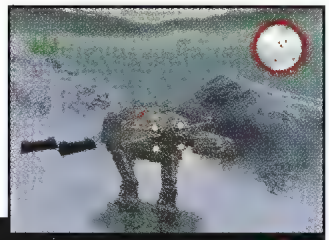
The as-yet-untitled mission pack will feature 13 new levels and is being developed by newcomer 2015, Inc.; although no release date has been announced, it will likely appear a few months after *SiN* releases this fall. "We really wanted to expand on the characters and dynamic story elements in *SiN* and decided that there was no better way to do that than with a carefully crafted, all-action add-on pack," says Ritual's Joe Selinske, project manager for *SiN*.

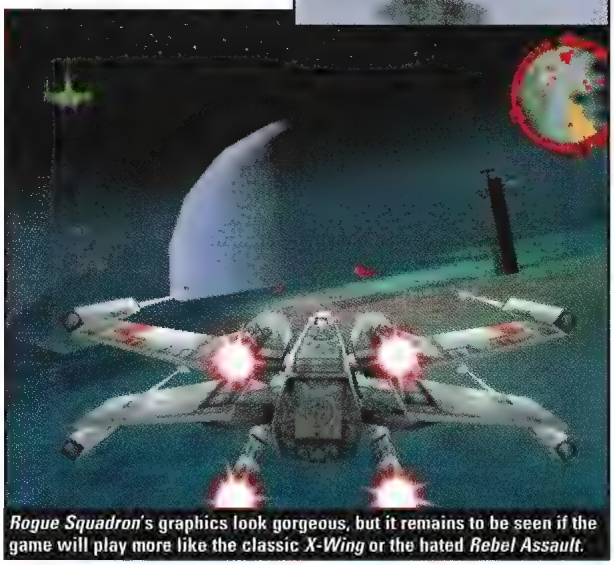
Selinske and Ritual CEO Harry Miller had nothing but nice things to say about 2015, but the developer is untested — the *SiN* mission pack will be its first product, and the Oklahoma-based team is, according to Activision, "comprised of die-hard gamers from around the country" with no previous credits to their name. But what we've seen of *SiN* so far bodes well for any add-ons, so we're remaining optimistic and can't wait to see the first mission pack — and, for that matter, the game itself.

Red Five, Standing By!

Rogue Squadron novels come to the PC

LucasArts has released the first screenshots of its upcoming PC title *Rogue Squadron*. The game is an attempt to marry the impressive graphics of *Shadows of the Empire* with the gameplay of the company's *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* titles. Based on the Star Wars novels of the same name, *Rogue Squadron* puts players in the cockpit of an X-Wing fighter through 16 progressively difficult missions. The game, which is being developed in tandem with a Nintendo 64 version, is due for release this holiday season.





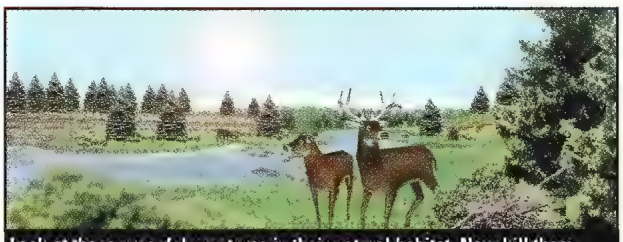
Rogue Squadron's graphics look gorgeous, but it remains to be seen if the game will play more like the classic *X-Wing* or the hated *Rebel Assault*.

Yet Another Hunting Game

Zzzz... but wait! It uses the Unreal *engine!*

These days it seems as though a deer-hunting "simulation" is a compulsory part of any software company's product line, and ASC Games didn't get where it is today by not knowing which bandwagons to jump on. But the company that brought us *Grand Theft Auto* and *Sanitarium* is taking its attempt to cash in on the current wildlife-murdering simulation craze a little more seriously than most.

TNN Outdoors Pro Hunter features a "prestigious" license in the form of The Nashville Network, although how the hillbilly music cable station's involvement will actually benefit the game remains unclear at this stage. Far more interesting is the fact that ASC has licensed the white-hot *Unreal* engine to bring its woodlands environments to life, so that when you cap that defenseless doe in the head with a high-powered rifle, you'll really see it in high-res, texture-mapped detail!



Look at these graceful creatures in their natural habitat. Now kill them.

Just in case terminating harmless Bambis isn't enough to satisfy your inhumane blood-lust, you'll also get to take pot-shots at innocent rabbits, elk, turkey, and ducks. The game features a new technology called Active Wildlife Environment (AWE) that features varying climate and ground conditions and "scurrying animals" for a more realistic feel. There'll also be a multi-player mode, although it's doubtful you'll get to play as the deer, because a poor deer obviously has no sporting chance against a determined human armed with a telescopic rifle. Er... in any case, *TNN Outdoors Pro Hunter* will be available in November.

The designer of *Total Annihilation* is now hard at work on a role-playing game.

Microsoft Goes Gas-Powered

Software giant signs Total Annihilation *creator's start-up*

Total Annihilation lead designer Chris Taylor surprised the industry when he announced he was leaving Cavedog in the early stages of development on *TA2* — and now he's surprised everyone again, re-surfacing with his own game development company and a lucrative deal with Microsoft Games, which seems to be snapping up hot young developers by the truckload these days.

Gas Powered Games is the name of Taylor's new company, and his first game for Microsoft will be a roleplaying title. "Microsoft is proving its success in the games business by building strong teams around a small portfolio of high-quality games," Taylor says. "We share the same vision at Gas Powered Games."

No word yet on the name of Taylor's RPG, or when it's due to be released. Meanwhile, Cavedog has said that Taylor's departure should not have a significant impact on *Total Annihilation 2*, apart from pushing the release date back a little. You can read more on *TA2* in our Cavedog feature in this month's issue.

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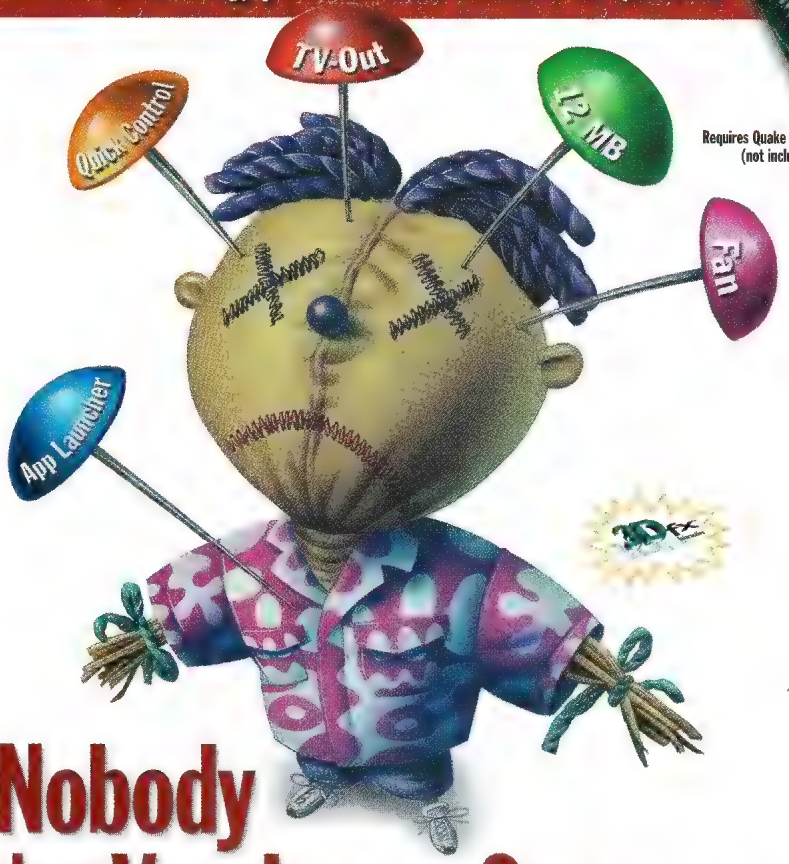

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News Briefs

Pro Pinball Hits the Road

Empire Interactive has announced that the sequel to its excellent pinball sim *Pro Pinball: Timeshock* will have an automotive theme. *Pro Pinball: Big Race USA* will also have a more lighthearted feel than its predecessor, featuring a variety of cartoon cars racing across 14 different American cities. The game will boast improved "spin and slide" ball physics and, for the first time, head-to-head play over the Internet. *Big Race USA* is scheduled for release this November.

Monster is one of the comical automobiles featured in *Pro Pinball: Big Race USA*.

Microsoft Adds to *Flight Simulator*

The world's best-selling and, according to Microsoft, most accurate PC flight simulator just got a little more accurate. The software giant has announced that future versions of *Microsoft Flight Simulator* will feature real-world navigational information supplied by Jeppesen's worldwide NavData database. The data will provide approaches for more than 12,500 airports, and add more than 32,000 new runways and 70,000 navigation waypoints worldwide. If that's the kind of thing that floats your boat, good for you.

A new mission pack for *Descent: Freespace* is on its way.

StarCraft Tops One Million

According to official figures, Blizzard's real-time strategy game *StarCraft* just earned itself a place amongst the PC's all-time top sellers by passing the coveted one million sales mark last month. The game has been topping the charts pretty consistently in recent months, holding games like *Unreal*, *Final Fantasy VII* and, thank God, *Deer Hunter*, away from the top spot.

999,996... 999,997... 999,998... 999,999... One million! Hooray!

MicroProse Gets its Motor Runnin'

The latest company to enter the cycle sim genre is MicroProse, with its announcement that it has picked up the rights to the FIM Road Racing World Championship GP 500. It plans to have a motorbike racing game based on the license in stores by next fall.

Interplay's Silent Threat

Interplay Productions has announced an add-on mission pack for its classy sci-fi shooter *Descent: Freespace*. The pack will go by the name of *Silent Threat*, and will feature a host of new single and multi-player missions, some of which were designed by the winners of a level-building competition hosted on Interplay's web site. *Silent Threat* should be shipping sometime this month. Meanwhile, Interplay has announced a revised March 1999 release date for its eagerly-awaited sequel *Descent 3*.

It's Time for DirectX 6.0

Just when you'd got used to the last one... Microsoft has shipped the latest version of DirectX, 6.0, to developers, ensuring that they'll be able to tailor their big holiday releases to make use of it. It shouldn't make much of a difference to John Q. Gamer, but you can expect to see a little faster hardware performance and improved stability. It's all good stuff, basically.

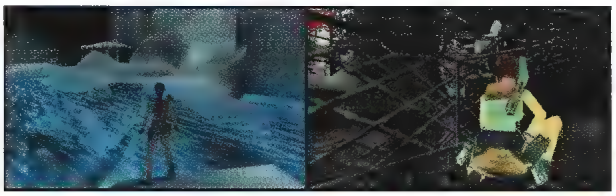
The PC Gamer Playlist

What's hot at the magazine's offices this month.

Oh my goodness, it's been such a dramatic month in the *PC Gamer* office this month, we're thinking of selling the rights to a TV network for a new daytime soap called *As The Game Loads*.

Between the blow-by-blow accounts of Greg's torrid love life, Gary's life-or-death battle with the demon drink, and Todd's traumatic announcement that he is, in fact, a woman called Stella, we just don't know which way to turn. As if we're not already having enough trouble battling terrorists all around in the globe in the game that has everyone hooked this month, *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*! We've become so stressed-out around here that Matt The Publisher has taken to administering compulsory full-body massages to all staff members in an attempt to save us from executive burn-out. Not that we're complaining or anything, but some people claim to be more stressed now than before the massages began. There's something about those cold, clammy fingers...

1.	*Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*	Everybody
2.	*SiN*	Everybody
3.	*Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*	Dan
4.	*Val Kilmer Bridge TE*	Gary, Mike L.
5.	*The Marching Dead*	Billy, Todd
6.	*TOCA Championship Racing*	Rob
7.	*Sentinel Returns*	Dean
8.	*Uncle Jeb's Guide to Barnstorming*	Wolf, Jay
9.	*StarCraft*	Gary, Lisa
10.	*Hide the Sausage*	Greg



Lara's Back (Again)

Tomb Raider III *shaping up for a holiday release*

We featured *Tomb Raider III* back in July as part of our massive 100-game mega-preview, but at the time Eidos was still keeping the game firmly under wraps. Now, though, the company has released some cool-looking screenshots from the new game, subtitled *Adventures of Lara Croft*.

Look out for Lara sporting a new camouflage outfit as she goes cat-burgling in London as part of her latest globe-trotting exploits. Developer Core Design has brought a new team onto the project, and they're currently tweaking the existing game engine and adding a couple of new moves, while the gameplay itself is expected to shift more toward puzzle-solving than action this time around.

Eidos will be releasing *Tomb Raider III* in time for the lucrative holiday season, natch, by which time it'll probably have the distinction of being one of the few games left on the market that you *don't* need a 3D accelerator to play. Of course, having one will definitely still be a plus....

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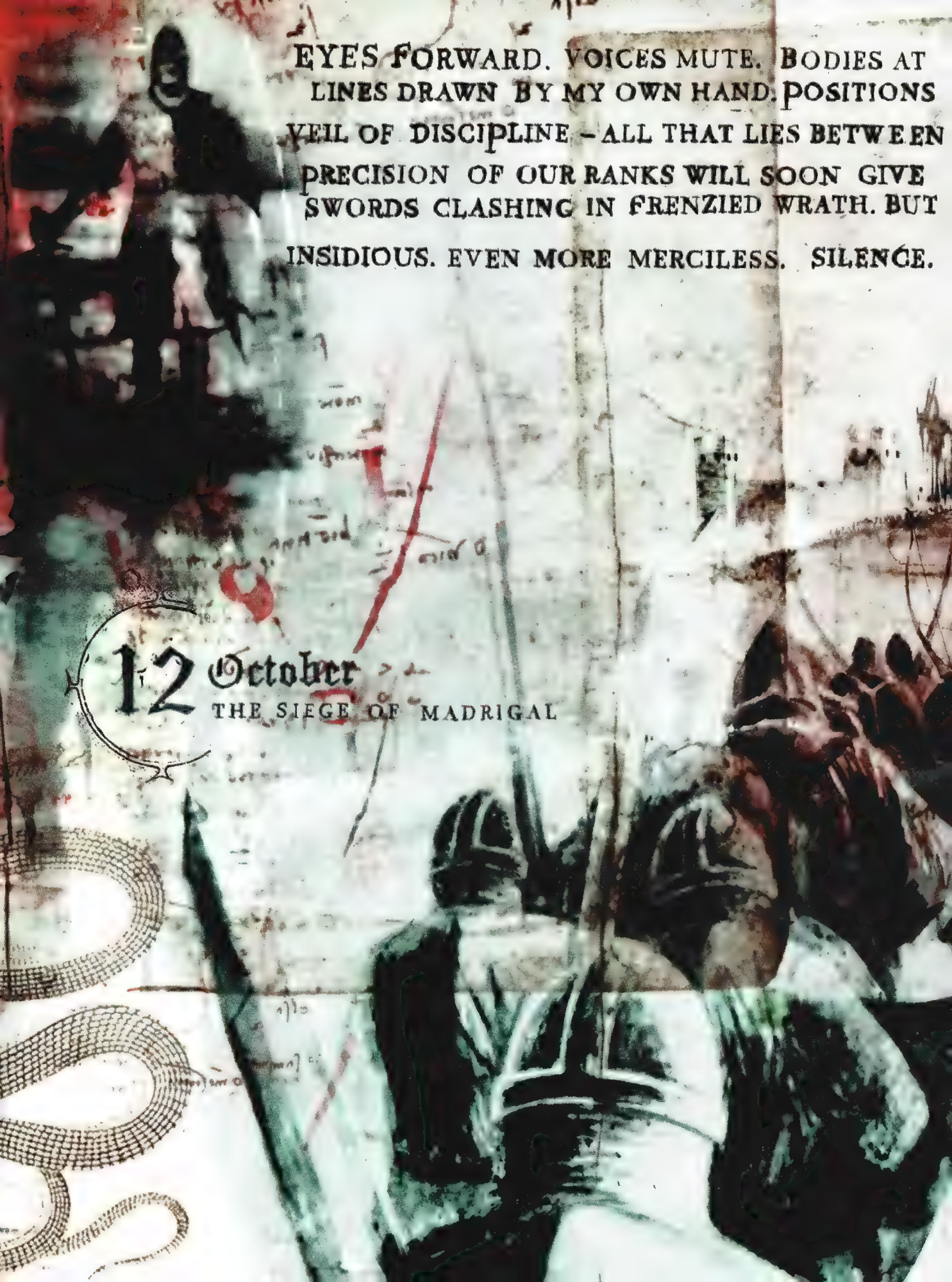
EYES FORWARD. VOICES MUTE. BODIES AT
LINES DRAWN BY MY OWN HAND. POSITIONS
VEIL OF DISCIPLINE – ALL THAT LIES BETWEEN
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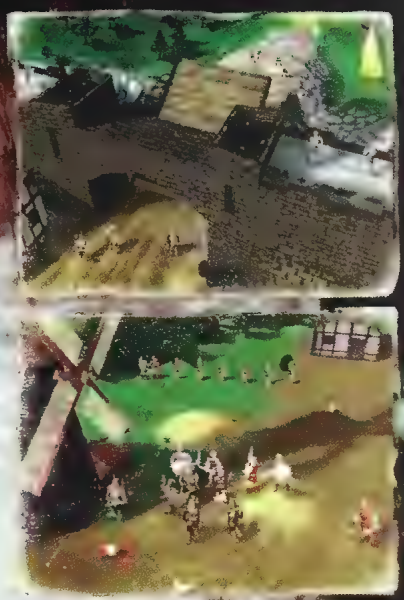
myth II
SOULBLIGHTER



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No detail is too small. Jane's graphics are so accurate, you'll see details like falling bits of fuselage as a plane is hit — and falls apart.

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the
50

50 best games ever

A lot has changed since PC Gamer *last named its 50 Best Games Ever back in May 1997. Some great new games have appeared to claim places on the list, while many timeless classics have steadfastly refused to budge — with good reason. The result is the most definitive, up-to-date listing of the PC's greatest games. Feel free to take issue...*

BY THE PC GAMER EDITORS

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COMING FALL '98!

The Operational Art of War

★★★★ TALONSOFT ★★★★

50

Legendary wargame designer Norm Koger poured a lifetime of love and expertise into this, his magnum opus. Covering every conflict from 1939 to 1955, *TOAW* gives you the most powerful and elegant scenario editor ever designed, allowing you either to recreate any historical battle or create whatever campaign your imagination dictates. You can deploy armies as large as 100 formations controlling 500 subordinate units! For any gamer with a passionate interest in military history, this is nothing less than the Holy Grail. The pre-designed scenarios (some of them big enough to be sold as stand-alone games!) are fresh and action-packed. While *TOAW* is certainly a complex game, the basic mechanics are clear enough for a novice to grasp. Once you get hooked, you'll explore the subtleties eagerly. Koger has produced nothing less than a masterpiece.

You Don't Know Jack Huge

★★ BERKELEY SYSTEMS ★★

48

After a decade of deadly dull PC trivia games, *You Don't Know Jack* shook this much-maligned little genre out of its slumber with flashy gameshow-style presentation, well-produced multimedia, entertaining questions, and a consistently funny, thigh-slapping attitude. Up to three players can compete in a (strongly encouraged) party atmosphere with the forever-unseen host jibing, ridiculing, and sometimes even cheating the contestants out of their virtual prize money. The series continues to evolve with volumes devoted to sports, movies, and television, but the current Huge compilation is your best bet, bundling Jack volumes 1, 2, and 3 together into one humongous package. Essential stuff.

Pro Pinball: Timeshock

★★ EMPIRE INTERACTIVE ★★

49

While pinball games may never achieve the blockbuster status of action or strategy titles, if there was ever a pinball game that deserved such recognition, we'd have to single out *Pro Pinball: Timeshock* as our pick. Most pinball games do a respectable job of recreating the look and feel of pinball, but *Timeshock* trumps them all due to its incredible table design, stunning graphics, and spot-on ball physics. Though there is only one table, it's a masterpiece that has obviously been designed by true flipper-mashing pinball fanatics — it's so good, we'd love to see it made into the real thing.

"In preparing for this feature, I went back to take another look at a lot of fantastic games — is this a great job or what? — but the one that still blows me away is Origin's *System Shock*, designed by Looking Glass. It came out four years ago, so its sights and sounds aren't exactly state-of-the-art — but in terms of sheer gameplay and an involving story line, most of today's action-adventures should hang their heads in shame when *System Shock* passes by."

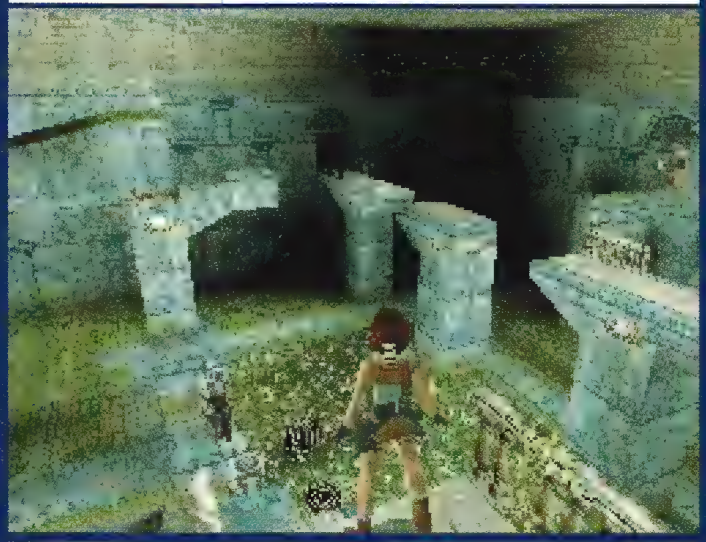
DAN BENNETT
EDITOR

Tomb Raider

★★★★ EIDOS INTERACTIVE ★★★★

Now something of a household name, *Tomb Raider* earned its spurs by creatively combining two disparate genres — action and adventure — with a style and flair that had never been seen before and, two whole years later, has yet to be bettered. It also gave the gaming world one of its most enigmatic heroes — Lara Croft, the spunky spelunker who proved that female avatars can capture the imagination just as well, if not better, than the stereotypical muscle-bound male heroes of the past. It's a little dated-looking now, but still tremendous fun to play and a legitimate piece of post-modern gaming history.

47



FPS: Football Pro

★★★★ SIERRA ★★★★

Providing a wealth of statistical data, along with the option for players to edit and save their own plays, *FPS: Football Pro* delivers on every level. The action is bone-crunching enough for any arcade fan, yet the strategy element is blended in with perfection, providing enough substance and strategy for the most hard-core fan. This game has it all: lifetime statistics for the players in the league, the ability to draft rookies, and the heartbreak of seeing proven veterans retire. *FPS: Football Pro* gave rise to a large and vibrant online crowd, as players swapped plays, leagues, and even teams. This is still the best all-round football game out there.

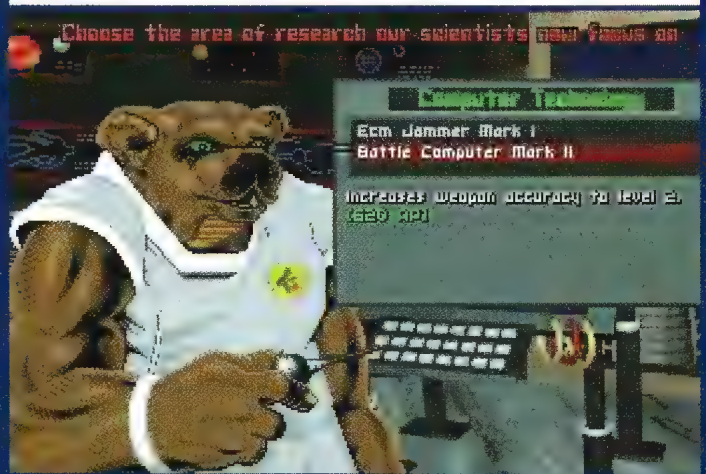
46

Master of Orion

★★★★ MICROPROSE ★★★★

There were numerous conquer-the-galaxy games before *Master of Orion* appeared, but none that combined, in such exquisite balance, the classic elements of exploration, research, resource management, and interstellar conflict. Even though it looks dated now, its slick interface and charming cast of devious and exotic aliens helped *Master of Orion* engender that "willing sense of disbelief" inherent in a great sci-fi space epic. Options galore gave it a rewarding depth of texture; the balance between world-building and gosh-wow space opera was just right. Its diplomatic element, featuring, for its time, very strong artificial intelligence, was unprecedented for its day and has been much imitated since. Winning required a rare blend of cunning and brute force. This game has rarely been challenged and, in its totality, never really surpassed, not even by its own sequel.

45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Ecm Jammer Mark I
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Betrayal at Krondor

★★★★ SIERRA ★★★★

Betrayal at Krondor didn't receive much acclaim when it first appeared — in fact, it wasn't until Sierra re-issued the game on CD-ROM that the roleplaying community finally realized what a gem the game was. From that point on, it has lived in the hearts of RPGers everywhere as an excellent example of how to do things right. The story, based on the best-selling Midkemia novels by Raymond Feist, was created with help from the author, and the result is one of the best plots any roleplaying game has ever had. An excellent turn-based combat system, tons of mind-bending puzzles, and months' worth of gameplay make this RPG a classic that will last through the ages.

44

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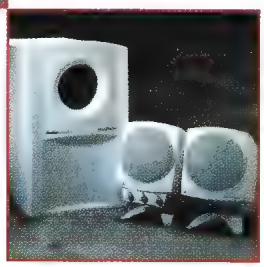

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"It may not be on the list, but in my mind, *Ultima V* was a roleplaying game of epic proportions, even by today's standards, and it is perhaps one the greatest games ever made. From the storyline to the character interaction, the level of detail was astonishing. Every character had some sort of purpose, held jobs, and even ran daily errands! Its non-linear gameplay and massive size meant the game took months to complete and truly immersed you into the living world of Ultima. Gotta love it!"

JAY VIDHEECHAROEN

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR

Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far

★★★★ MICROSOFT ★★★★

43

This is a wargame with a difference — a powerful difference. It puts you in command (on either the Allied or German side), of company-sized units during the gallant (but ultimately doomed) Allied airborne assault on the Rhine bridge at Arnhem. Victory or defeat hangs on your sagacity as a commander. Your beautifully animated troops move, fight, and respond as real men would in the crucible of combat. Their names, virtues, and flaws really become a matter of personal concern. Tank action, explosions, building and terrain damage are vividly depicted — so are heroism, failure, death, cowardice, and exhaustion. The realism is uncompromising: men die, go mad, cower, and sometimes perform prodigies of valor. The result? *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far* is the *Saving Private Ryan* of wargaming.

Diablo

★★★★ BLIZZARD ★★★★

42

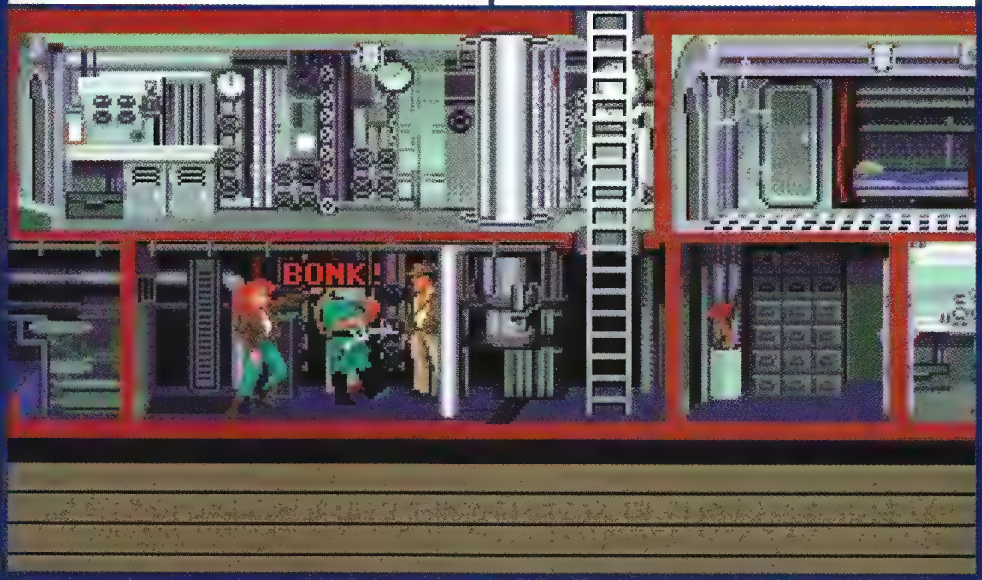
Not exactly a roleplaying game, not quite an action game, *Diablo* refused to be pidgeonholed when it came out late in 1997, and went on to become one of the PC's most successful games of all time. And while it defied categorization into any one of the more conventional genres, it still managed to be one of the most exciting and immersing games of the year — heck, of any year. From its randomization of monsters, weapons, and dungeons to its haunting music and sound effects, *Diablo* is a heavy flow-less gaming experience. Add to that free multi-player support over a modem or on Blizzard's battle.net, and you've got a true classic.

Indiana Jones and The Fate of Atlantis

★★★★ LUCASARTS ★★★★

41

While the world waits patiently for another Indiana Jones movie, PC gamers can relive one of Indy's greatest adventures again and again in this terrific graphic adventure from LucasArts. This original tale spins off brilliantly from the movie trilogy, propelling Indy on a race against time to locate the lost underwater city of Atlantis — before the Nazis, natch, get there first. A compelling story, clever puzzles, great characters and dialogue, plenty of humor, and multiple ways to advance through the story all add up to a milestone achievement for LucasArts, this genre's greatest exponent, and it remains required playing for adventurers everywhere.



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THINGS TO DO TODAY
I. ROUND UP PEOPLE FOR THE LION PITS.
II. PRACTICE WAVING TO THE PEOPLE (IN ADORING FASHION).
III. HIRE VOICE COACH TO HELP PRACTICE EVIL LAUGHTER.
IV. SEND RIVAL A BASKET OF POISONED FRUIT.
V. RAISE TAXES TO FUND MORE TAX COLLECTORS.
VI. HIRE MORE VIGILS TO PATROL THE SLUMS.
VII. MEET CLEOPATRA FOR DINNER (THIS MIGHT BE THE NIGHT).
VIII. ABSOLUTELY DON'T FORGET TO...
CENTURION
This fruit basket looks absolutely delicious! It's awfully nice of you to have me deliver it to your arch rival. I thought you hated each other?
I wonder if anyone would notice an extra scarab...?
PIG FARMER
Gotta wash the stench of horse manure out of my clothes in time for church! There will be a lot of single ladies at Venus' temple tonight. Rumor has it the priest is going to denounce birth control!
PRIEST
Dedicating the temple to Venus was a smart move. Church attendance hasn't been this high in years! Then again, neither has the city's population.
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LISTEN TO YOUR PEOPLE!

LION TAMER
Tipping the vigil off to arrest plebs for loitering was ingenious! Its much cheaper to feed my lions prisoners than the meat from that farmer. We'll see how long those gladiators last against my boys now!
VIGIL
I'm being transferred back to the slums for riot control – the Lion Tamer tipped me a gold piece to round up some fresh meat for his pets.
TAX COLLECTOR
If you are planning to build a new Colosseum as I suspect, you'll need a lot more money and a lot more guys like me to gather it. People who think taking candy from a baby is wrong just haven't bothered to try it.

- Build, rule and battle on one screen–no more switching between city, province and battle screens!
- Visual feedback: The real-time effects of the player's actions are immediately visible on screen.
- Various terrain sets include deserts, forests, mountains and multiple elevations.
- Construct temples to various gods of the Roman Pantheon and witness the effects on your city.
- More progressive career structure and intuitive interface mean more exciting, longer lasting gameplay.

CAESAR III

Build a Better Rome

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Impressions.

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CAESAR™ III

Building a Better Rome for You.

New Colosseum to Open this July!

Sierra Studios' Caesar III™ debuts various terrain sets including deserts, forests, mountains and multiple elevations. Build trade routes and relationships to fill your city's coffers!

Dear Cleopatra,

Just wanted to drop you a note to let you know that I'm anxiously looking forward to your visit to my city. As you can see from this postcard, our city continues to expand. There is plenty to entertain you here: gladiator contests, chariot races, and the most luxurious baths in all the west. I'm not implying that someone of your renown beauty would need a bath, of course, just that maybe you'd like to take one with me. I mean not WITH me, obviously, but at the same time. In separate baths. AT the baths. I wish you godspeed and a safe journey.

All my best,

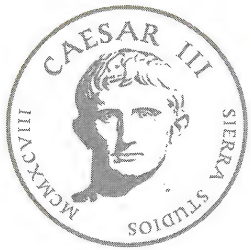
Caesar

PC 22

Colosseum Construction

Rome, Italy

Photo: L. Nero



Cleopatra

c/o The Palace

Egypt, Africa

00014

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"I played *Diablo* so much that my mouse-clicking finger hurt long after I'd stopped. The multi-player games I would get into with my friends were the most fun; because it's not possible to save games in multi-player, it was always a heart-pounding experience. When I would die and lose all of my powerful weapons and armor, I'd have a buddy with a strong character join my game and go pick up my stuff! *Diablo* is the only game that put me in danger of flunking out of school."

GREG VEDERMAN
TECHNICAL EDITOR

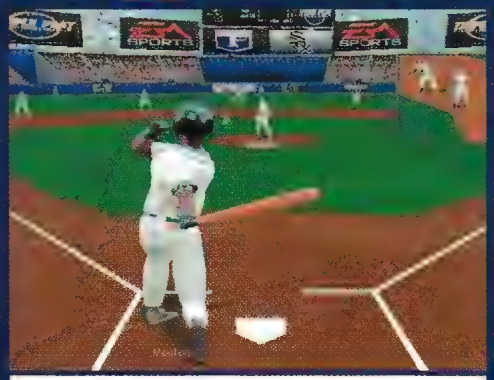
Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe

★★★★ RENEGADE ★★★★

40

While recent futuresports games like *Hyperblade* and *Blood Bowl* come and go with little fuss, one title still owns this sub genre with authority after five years in the biz.

Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe is a no holds barred cross between soccer and basketball played between two teams of [illegible] armored players inside a [illegible] steel arena. Player power ups and scary mutilations make for a fast, skillful game, while the unabashed brutality (violently taking out opposing players is positively encouraged) adds to the fun. Even with graphics and sound that are almost hopelessly dated by today's standards, *Speedball 2* is still one of the funnest sports games out there.



Triple Play 97

★★★★ EA SPORTS ★★★★

39

While baseball purists and stats fans may balk at this choice, the fact remains that *Triple Play 97* is the most enjoyable and atmospheric action-based baseball game available. Not as clunky or as hardware-intensive as its follow-ups, *Triple Play 97* is fast, addictive, and, with its terrific presentation and two-man commentary, immerses the player in that authentic day-at-the-ballpark atmosphere like no other. Daisy-chain some gamepads, and the multi-player fun is unsurpassed — something that the *PC Gamer* team can attest to after countless summer days lost to office grudge matches and tournaments.

D/Generation

★★★★ MINDSCAPE ★★★★

38

With simple, 16-color isometric graphics and squeaky sound effects, *D/Generation*'s aesthetics have not aged well over the years — but the gameplay is still as fresh and inviting as the day it was first released. Born in the classic days of simple, fun arcade adventuring, *D/Generation* casts you as a futuristic courier who must [illegible] the corridors and offices of a bio-weapons company that has been taken over by its own killer experiments. With masterful pacing that alternates between quiet tension and moments of terrifying action, clever puzzles, and a great story, *D/Generation* is a gameplay masterpiece that has stood the test of time.

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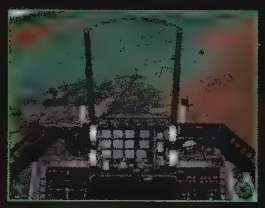
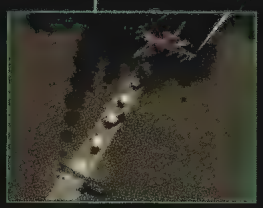
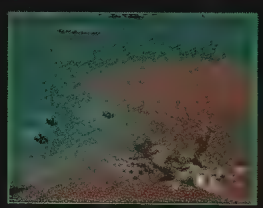


The F-16 "fly-by-wire" system has been modified to perfection. No other consumer flight sim has accomplished this feat.



40 exciting missions spread across 4 campaigns with a vast array of military targets.



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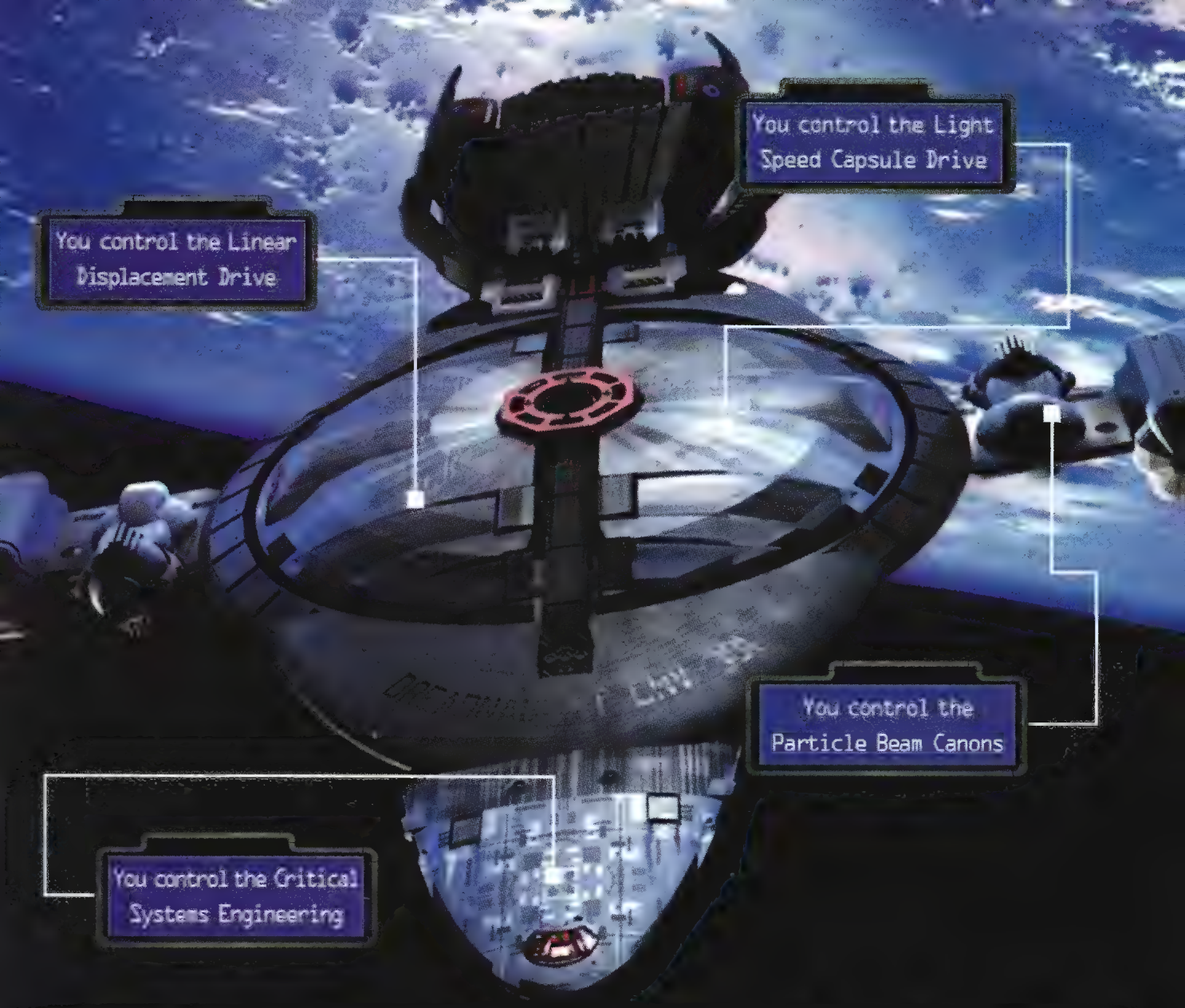
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You control the Particle Beam Canons
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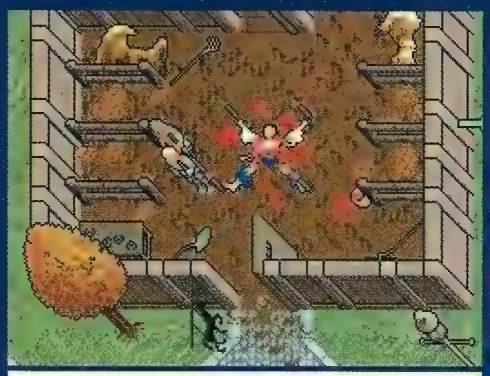
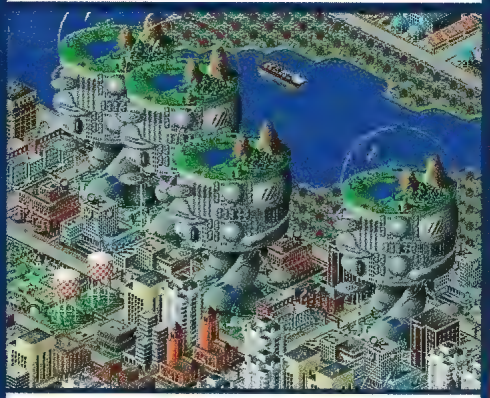


Ultima VII

★★★★ ORIGIN SYSTEMS ★★★★

Ultima VII is considered by many to be the pinnacle of this long-running series. Containing all the things that made *Ultima* great and more, the seventh episode fine-tuned the art of computer roleplaying like never before. With devious puzzles, a completely interactive world, and tons of character interaction, it's a game that will have players pondering their next move for weeks. The system of playing a moral, upright character in the role of the Avatar required true roleplaying, and the story kept players coming back again and again. If you're looking for the best of the greatest computer roleplaying series ever, this is the game you want.

37



Sim City 2000

★★★★ MAXIS ★★★★

How much fun can running a city be? Well, as anyone who's sat up bleary-eyed all night playing *SimCity 2000* will attest, it can be *lots* of fun. The original *SimCity* laid the foundations with its pioneering design, but it was the sequel that really brought the experience to life with gorgeous graphics and, quite literally, new depth to the gameplay. If having total control over every aspect of a growing city, from taxes to policing, from education to water supply, from zoning to defending the city from space aliens (yes, really), *SimCity 2000* will float your boat like no other game on earth.

35

Starflight

★★★ ELECTRONIC ARTS ★★★

Before Interplay released its wonderful *Star Trek 25th Anniversary* adventure game, *Starflight* was the most authentic Star Trek experience you could have on a PC — and it wasn't even a Trek game. Some ten years after its release, this sci-fi roleplaying game's graphics and sounds are naturally dated — but in sheer gameplay, it still tops most of today's best RPGs. Who can forget the thrill of scanning an unexplored planet and finding it chock-full of valuable minerals and life-forms — or that tense first-contact encounter with yet another new alien race? Or even the excitement of earning enough money to add even more cargo pods to your ship? This one sits near the top of our list of classic games we'd love to see updated with today's technology. How about it, EA?

36

Doom

★★★★ ID SOFTWARE ★★★★

Probably the most imitated game of all time, *Doom* continued what *Wolfenstein 3D* began and elevated the fledgling 3D-shooter genre to blockbuster status. With this timeless classic, id re-wrote the rules for action gaming forever by refusing to compromise on the level of gore or the speed and intensity of the gameplay. Its quasi-2D engine has since been surpassed by the "freelook" world of *Quake*, but most of today's 3D fraggers will admit that *this* was the game that changed their perceptions of action gaming, and put them on the path to guts'n'glory. Amazingly, it still looks and plays well even in the face of today's technologically superior competition.

34

"As much as I love *Jedi Knight* and *StarCraft*, I still have to go with *WarCraft II* as my favorite game of all time. The excellent gameplay, stirring music and sound effects, detailed graphics, and advanced editing capabilities are unparalleled. Both the single-player and multi-player games kept me playing for hours and hours. I love all the little touches like the exploding critters and quirky character dialogue. *WarCraft II* earned its place in my heart like no other, and there it will stay."

LISA H. RENNINGER

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

MANAGING EDITOR

"If there's one game on this list that stands out for me, it has to be *Civilization II*. In *PC Gamer*'s last Top 50 it was ranked in fourth place — this time around, thanks to my constant lobbying and yelling and screaming, it came in at a more-deserved number two — but I still think it should be higher! In my mind, no other game comes as close to perfection as *Civilization II*. It is fun, challenging, exciting, and has unlimited replay value. A masterpiece."

WILLIAM HARMS
MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

The Curse of Monkey Island

★★★★ LUCASARTS ★★★★

33

There's no rarer quality in PC gaming than sustained, rollicking humor, especially in the usually poker-faced "adventure" genre. But in this the third episode of the Quixotic adventures of hapless, love-smitten, Guybrush Threepwood, LucasArts pulled it off in high style. Featuring snappy dialogue, clever sight-gags, wonderfully oddball characters, and screwball puzzles, this shiver-me-timbers romp through the Spanish Main has all the laugh-out-loud goofiness of the best Mel Brooks movies.

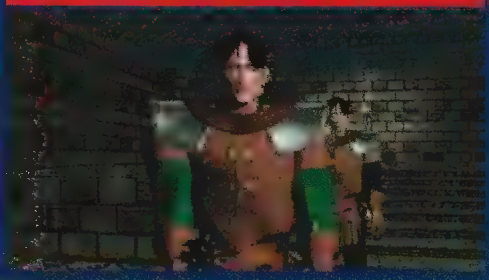
The deft (and daft) plot abounds in fiendish (but always good-natured) conundrums and no-way-out situations, but thoughtfully offers an "easy" mode for the puzzle-challenged. The saga is graced by some of the most gorgeous hand-drawn graphics you'll ever see in a game (a cross between top-drawer Disney and the romantic "pirate" paintings of N.C. Wyeth). This is a grand, timeless adventure, sharply written and flawlessly voice-acted.

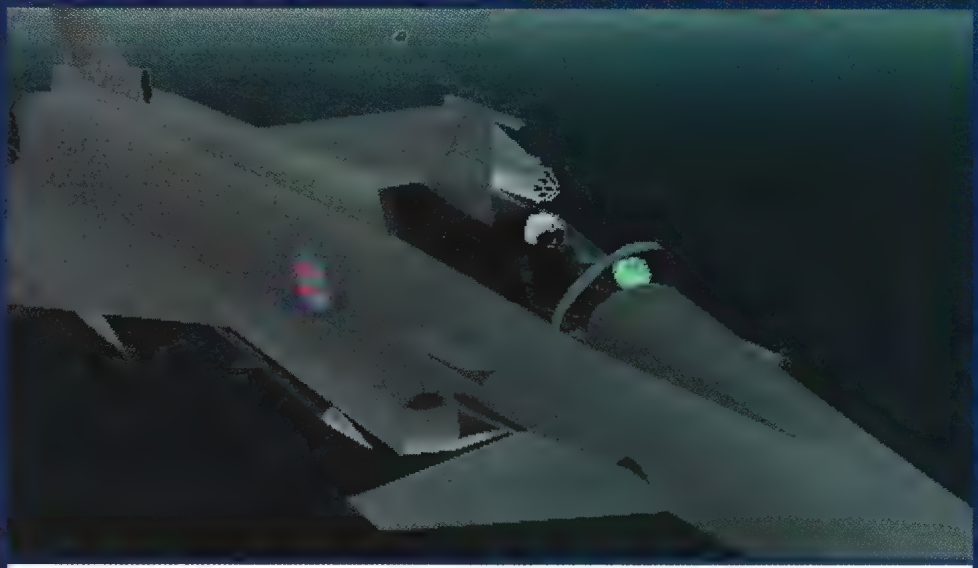
Might and Magic VI: The Mandate of Heaven

★★★★ 3DO ★★★★

32

A newcomer to the roleplaying scene, *Might and Magic VI* earned a place in the Top 50 by simply doing everything a computer roleplaying game should do — primarily, the epic story kept players looking for more. The simple yet full-featured combat system, with the ability to toggle turn-based and real-time modes at will, made the game fiendishly addictive. The huge game world and vast array of characters, NPCs, monsters, items, and unique skill and level system make it a pleasure to play, and difficult to quit. It's a must-have for any roleplaying fan's collection.





EF 2000 2.0

★★★★ DID ★★★★

31

This thoroughly updated version of DID's sophisticated Eurofighter sim has a whole lot going for it: a believable simulation of a very sexy next-century fighter; a highly detailed dynamic campaign system; and multi-player support so thorough and versatile that it's become a favorite of online "squadrons" everywhere — not to mention graphics so gorgeous that some of today's latest air combat sims can't quite match them. DID's next project is *F-22 Total Air War*, an update of the excellent *F-22 ADF* — if it's as big an improvement over the original as *EF2000 2.0* is over *EF2000*, you may well find it on the list next time we look at our all-time favorites.

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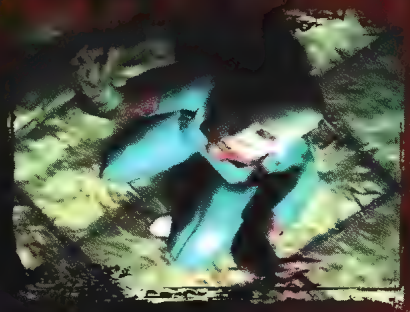

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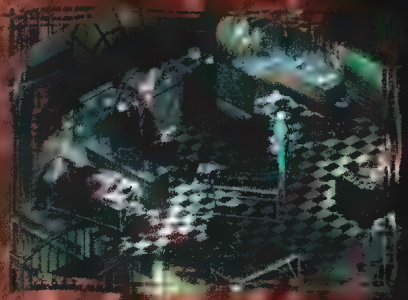

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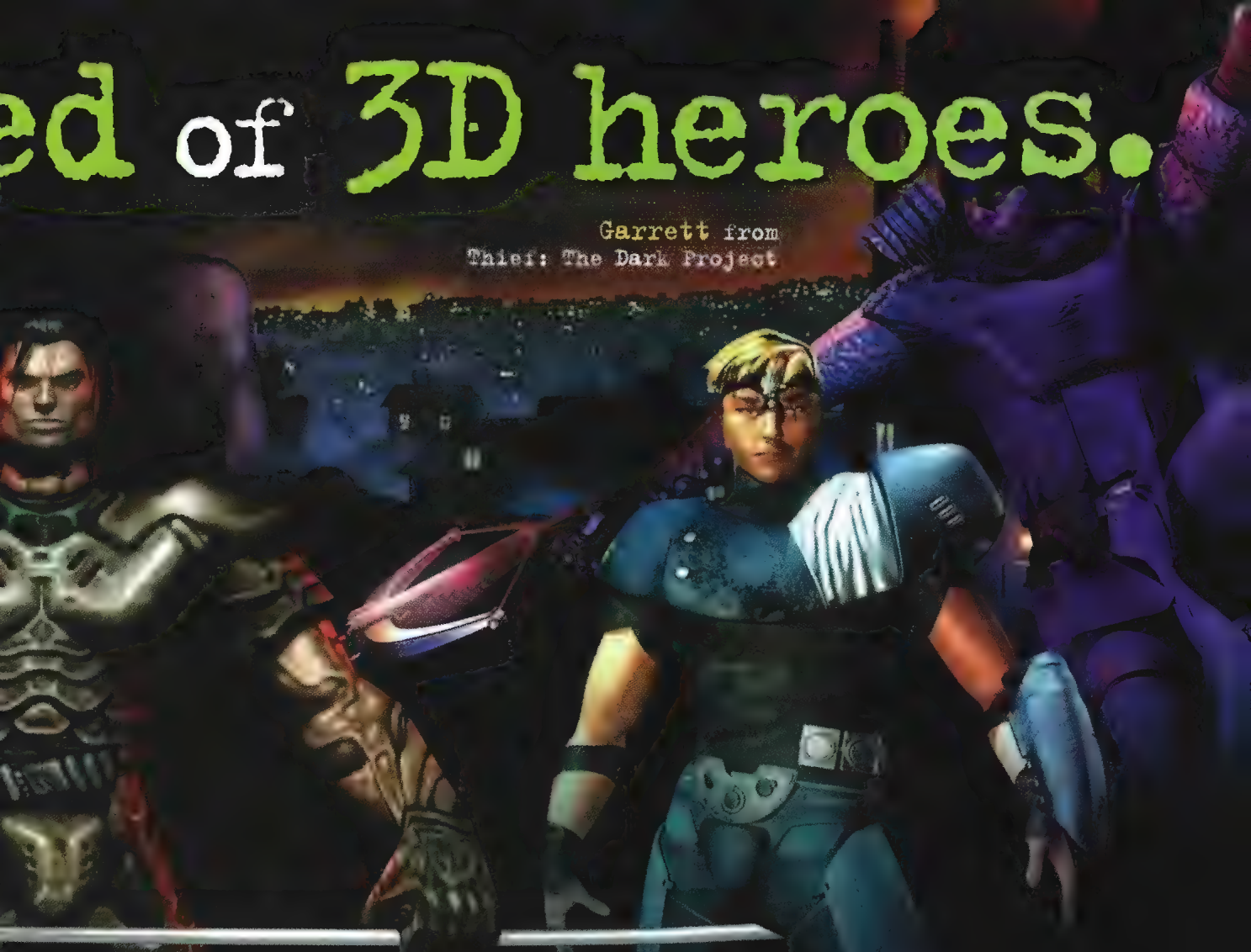

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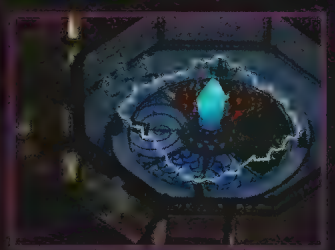

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Worms 2

★★★★ MICROPROSE ★★★★

Proof that games are often at their best when they don't take themselves too seriously, *Worms 2* is a funny, original, and thoroughly addictive combination of action and strategy.

30

Opposing teams of angry little cartoon worms take turns trying to blow each other off the landscape with an assortment of crazy weapons (everything from bazookas and super sheep to crazy old ladies and holy hand grenades) — and the last worm standing is the winner. It sounds simple, but the devious level designs and unpredictable weapon effects make this a much craftier and more tactical exercise than you'd expect. It's also tremendous fun in multi-player!

Quake

★★★★ ID SOFTWARE ★★★★

A classic in ever sense of the word, it's a testament to *Quake*'s enduring appeal that legions of hard-core Internet gamers continue to remain loyal to it a year after the technically superior sequel was released — indeed, many believe it to be a better, purer game. Though its graphics engine may have since been surpassed by *Quake II*, *Unreal*, and countless others, the original *Quake* remains one of the most addictive, adaptable, and pulse-pounding 3D shooters ever created. Its contribution to the genre is inestimable, and PC gaming as a whole has been forever changed by its impact. No self-respecting gameplayer has an excuse to be without a copy.

28

Duke Nukem 3D

★★★★ 3D REALMS ★★★★

What began as a simple *Doom* knock-off quickly evolved into a gaming icon. *Duke Nukem 3D* introduced comedy and attitude into a genre that up until then had consisted mainly of dank dungeons and foreboding atmosphere. In this action-filled romp, Duke kicks alien ass through city streets, movie theatres, strip clubs, subways, and a football field, cracking wise all the while. There is no false sentiment and no apologies. The baddies deserve to have a rocket fired up their asses, and Duke does it in style, stopping to tip strippers along the way. Toss in great multi-player, and *Duke Nukem 3D* is an absolute blast, even with its now-antiquated engine. Come get some!

29

Gabriel Knight: The Best Within

★★★★ SIERRA ★★★★

The *PC Gamer* team debated passionately over which Gabriel Knight adventure should be considered for the top 50 list — *Sins of the Fathers*, the first in the series, or its sequel *The Beast Within*. Finally, though, *The Beast Within* emerged triumphant, thanks to its fast-paced storytelling, edge-of-the-seat suspense, and some of the best use of full-motion video ever seen in a game. Either of the two Gabriel Knight games are well worth playing, but the second one edges out the first in pure excitement and graphic splendor.

27

"As Resident Curmudgeon, I'll reach back into the mists and nominate *Empire Deluxe* as the most addictive wargame there ever was. It's as much fun to play today as it was the day it came out. Another antique also holds a permanent spot in my heart: SSI's epic *Sword of Aragon*. The balance between swords and sorcery was exquisite, the narrative had epic sweep, and the crude, cave-art graphics actually seemed to lend atmosphere. I simply couldn't stop playing it."

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

SENIOR WRITER

"In 1995, I upgraded my ancient 386 to a Pentium 133, and the first game I bought for it was *Dark Forces*. Some of my fondest gaming memories are of charging through those Imperial compounds blasting Stormtroopers and unraveling the mystery of the Dark Troopers. I must have spent hours trying to defeat Boba Fett on the hardest difficulty setting, and the third level Dark Trooper is *still* the coolest end-game boss I have ever encountered!"

MICHAEL LUTON
WEBMASTER

Interstate '76

★★★★ ACTIVISION ★★★★

26

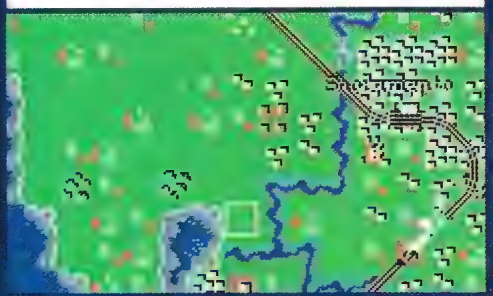
This may well be the most original action game released in a decade. When *Interstate '76* came out, it was surprising enough for gamers just to see a first-person car-combat game done so very well — but it was sheer inspiration to set the game [illegible] make the vehicles fictionalized versions of that era's most-prized muscle cars, and set the whole thing to an original, 1970s-style funk soundtrack. On top of all that, its single-player missions were tied together by a great storyline played out in cut-scenes that seamlessly matched the in-game graphics — and the multi-player action kept us driving circles around each other for weeks.

Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon

★★★★ MICROPROSE ★★★★

25

Groundbreaking in every sense, this was one of Meier's most brilliantly original concepts: a ruthless "robber baron" simulation of the greatest era of commercial expansion in US history — and the ultimate train set into the bargain. With no anti-trust laws to curb their business practices, players rapaciously expand their routes, monopolize markets, manipulate stocks, buy low, sell high, and, in general, try to screw the competition mercilessly. Your sense of empire-building while playing *Railroad Tycoon* is intoxicating; the best games capturing the Capitalism-run-amok era in which it was possible for two rascals like Fiske and Gould actually to capture the American Gold Market.



Beavis and Butt-head in Virtual Stupidity

★★★★ VIACOM ★★★★

24

While it's easy to dismiss *Beavis and Butt-head in Virtual Stupidity* as a simple computerized cash-in of MTV's popular cartoon duo, we're confident there's rarely been an adventure as uniformly playable or as lovingly crafted as this one. Though it features all of the toilet humor and sight gags you've come to expect from this clueless couple, *Virtual Stupidity* really is an honest-to-goodness adventure game, with excellent puzzles, a slick interface, and a story that is true to the subject matter. Plus, it's downright funny, with series creator Mike Judge providing the voices for the boys as they attempt to join Todd's gang. It's a great piece of adventure gaming, and we're not the least bit ashamed in saying so.

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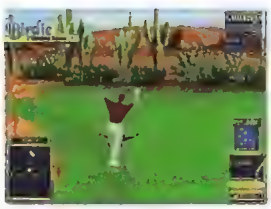

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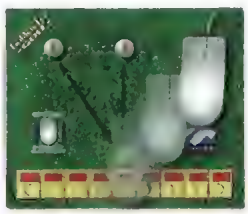

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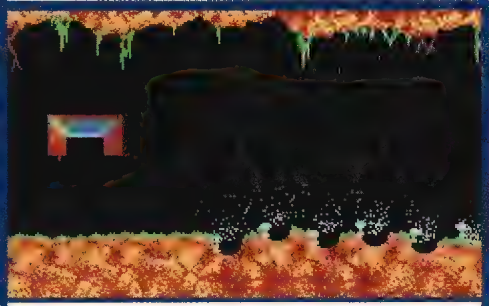
Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

★★★ ELECTRONIC ARTS ★★★

Yeah, sure, today's flight sims are more realistic (and incomparably more complicated) but none — absolutely none! — packs more sheer fun than this classic. Missions range from World War Two to Korea and Vietnam, and the slick-as-paint editor lets you pit any plane against any other (Mustangs against B-52s, for instance). Flying is a snap — nobody bitches about "accurate flight models" because the Mustangs, Focke-Wulfs, and Sabres just *feel* right. Yeager himself is your coach, giving advice (or sympathy), and imparting the basics of flight instruction. Though obviously dated, the graphics serve the action so well that you'll soon forget about mip-mapped terrain and 3D accelerators. Hot-shot jet simulators abound these days, but none offers more seat-of-the-pants dogfight pleasure than this golden oldie.

23



Lemmings

★★★★ PSYGNOSIS ★★★★

When you're missing meals, losing sleep, and pulling your hair out all for the sake of a game, you know you've got something special on your hard drive. And Psygnosis' classic *Lemmings* is one of the few games capable of inspiring all three for weeks on end. This aging puzzle game introduced players to a style of puzzling that had never been seen before — and though it's often been imitated since, it's never been bettered. The goal is simple: manipulate the movements of a hundred dimwitted critters through a series of deadly 2D levels filled with traps and hazards in an attempt to direct them to safety rather than their otherwise inevitable doom. It may not look like much, but the gameplay is as fresh and addictive today as it was when it was first released.

21

Alone in the Dark

★★★★ I-MOTION ★★★★

Long before Capcom's zombie-infested *Resident Evil* was a twinkle in some demented programmer's eye, I-Motion set the standard for computerized horror with 1993's Lovecraft-inspired horrorfest, *Alone in the Dark*. Though *Alone in the Dark*'s bone-chilling atmosphere, attractive graphics, and action-packed gameplay spawned several sequels, the original remains the high-point of the series thanks to its spine-tingling storyline and creepy monsters. As a Victorian-era detective hired to investigate a haunted mansion, you begin to unravel a nightmare world of ghostly apparitions, otherworldly cults, and a long dead pirate. It scared the bejeezus out of us, and we bet it can still do the same to you.

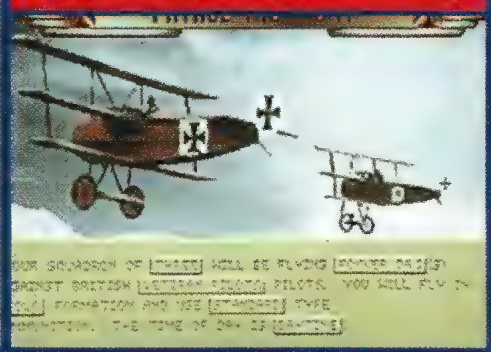
22

Red Baron

★★★★ SIERRA ★★★★

Aerial combat up close and personal, from the era when real men eschewed parachutes and organized murder still wrapped itself in a cloak of chivalry — Knights of the Sky indeed! The sense of mano-a-mano challenge is exhilarating. The seven-year-old graphics hold up surprisingly well; career modes are believable; custom and historically based missions galore give *Red Baron* terrific replay value. There are fancier, newer, WWI flight sims (including the buggy, half-baked sequel, *Red Baron II*), but none matches the original in terms of action, variety, and ease-of-play. Dynamix got it all right the first time, but screwed up royally in the sequel. Sooner or later, *Red Baron* will of course be superseded, but for the moment, it rules the skies.

20



"Shortly after I got into PC gaming in 1991, I found myself at the software store staring dumbly at the shelves. The salesman came over and recommended *Railroad Tycoon*. Having no interest in the subject, I ignored him and picked up the forgettable and nearly unplayable *Space 1889* instead. After cursing my stupidity, I went back later and gave 'that train game' a try. To this day, I can think of no other game that captured my imagination as well as this one did. Bravo, Sid!"

ROB SMOLKA

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

ASSISTANT EDITOR

"There's never been a game that was more fun to play than *WarCraft II*. Other games have tried to be as funny or as engrossing or as addictive, but none have lived up to the staying power of this classic from Blizzard. What could be more enjoyable than pitting glorious knights against vicious orcs? Throw in plenty of quirky humor, and you've got yourself a masterpiece. Other games have since appeared boasting superior graphics and other features, but nothing will ever be as much fun as *WarCraft II*."

DEAN RENNINGER

ART DIRECTOR

Myth

★★★★ BUNGIE ENT. ★★★★

19

To a genre slowly suffocating under the mass of sameness, *Myth* is a breath of fresh air. The winner of our Real-Time Strategy Game of the Year award for 1997, *Myth* proves all the conventional wisdom surrounding RTS games wrong. From its medieval setting pitting humans versus the Fallen Lords, to its revolutionary 3D engine, *Myth* delivers a completely innovative strategy experience on every level. The single-player game is a challenging, horrific ride, and the variety of multi-player games on Bungie.net prove that a real-time strategy game can consist of more than just head-on combat. This is a modern classic.

Ultima Underworld I, II

★★★★ ORIGIN SYSTEMS ★★★★

18

Light-years ahead of their time, and still regarded as some of the best roleplaying games ever created, the two Ultima Underworld games brought the Ultima universe to life as never before, putting the player in the first-person boots of a dungeon-crawling adventurer. The 3D engine featured elements that had never been seen before — six degrees of freedom, flying, ducking, and intensive roleplaying elements, and amazingly all before *Wolfenstein 3D* hit the shelves! Blue Sky Software, now known as Looking Glass Productions, created these games with help from Origin, and for many RPG fans, they represent the quintessential first-person experience.

NHL 98

★★★★ EA SPORTS ★★★★

17

EA Sports has consistently generated some of the most visceral and exciting sports games around, with in-your-face style and fast paced action — but the downside has often been lackluster realism and spotty statistics.

Such criticism cannot be levelled at the company's incredible NHL series, however. From its debut season in 1994 to our current favorite, *NHL 98*, this franchise has consistently delivered the lightning-fast action of hockey with convincing and addictive results.

The 1998 incarnation bolstered the action-packed stick-swinging of previous seasons with some newly added coaching options and unsurpassed 3D-accelerated graphics, including some amazing renders of the league's stadiums. The result is one of the finest hockey games ever. From the broadcast style presentation to the bone-crunching checks, *NHL 98* is quite simply the most entertaining sports game around.

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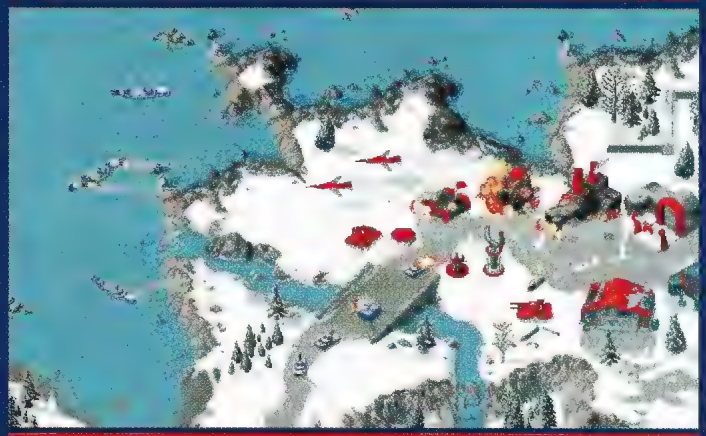
Battlezone

★★★★ ACTIVISION ★★★★

Activision's skillful reworking of the classic arcade tank game turned out to be one of the most refreshing games of 1998, delivering jaw-dropping graphics, a slick interface, and lots of action-packed gameplay — but the most surprising thing was how it went so much deeper than just a graphic reworking of its twenty year-old namesake. An artful hybrid of action and strategy, *Battlezone* triumphs by putting the player in complete control over the battlefield, managing resources, deploying defenses, and directing troops all from the cockpit of a hover tank. While the combination of controls could've proved tricky, the simple and effective interface proves to be one of the game's strong suits, allowing players to dive headlong into battle or build their bases with equal ease.

16



Command & Conquer: Red Alert

★★★★ WESTWOOD STUDIOS ★★★★

Real-time strategy has been one the liveliest, most fiercely competitive genres of the last two years, and yet in the eighteen months since the publication of our last Best 50 Games Ever, only one RTS title has appeared that deserves a higher placing than *Red Alert*. That speaks volumes for the classiness and longevity of Westwood's *Command & Conquer* prequel, a perfectly balanced and action-packed epic that functions brilliantly in both the multi-play and the solo campaigns. A strong storyline and plenty of characterization add to the enjoyment, but the main reason to dive in is simply to enjoy some of the finest real-time strategy gaming ever designed.

14

Panzer General II

★★★★ SSI ★★★★

Even more than its surprisingly successful predecessor, *Panzer General II* serves as the perfect introduction to wargaming. The well-honed interface makes it easy for the novice to deploy and maneuver his forces, yet there is plenty of depth to hold the veteran wargamer in thrall. Superbly realistic and colorful graphics provide an aesthetically pleasing you-are-there ambience. Campaigns really feel like campaigns as you try to nurture your "core force" into an elite legion. The built-in sense of roleplaying ("Look, Ma, I'm a real field marshall!") seamlessly reinforces your battlefield persona. Single battles range from easy conquests (early in the game), to tactical challenges that would test the merits of Rommel. This game seduced thousands of non-wargamers, making it a "crossover" title without precedent. A landmark product in every respect.

15

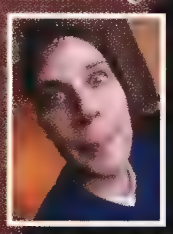
Unreal

★★★★ EPIC MEGAGAMES ★★★★

Often, when a game is repeatedly delayed, the final product turns out to be an unfocused mess. Thankfully, *Unreal* turned that unwritten rule on its head. The moment it was released, it set a whole new standard for graphics in the 3D action genre. The colored lighting, the high resolution textures, lens flare, and a host of other visual effects all create a true "ooh" and "aah" experience. But beyond the pretty pictures, *Unreal* presents an excellent single-player experience, showcasing outstanding AI, innovative weaponry, and some of the best level design seen to date. The addition of automated DeathMatch 'Bots and a level editor ensure that *Unreal* will have a very long life indeed.

13

"For anyone who's tried it — and too few have — *Realms of the Haunting* has to be one of the best computer adventure games ever made. Unfortunately, it didn't make it on to the Top 50 list, despite my protests! Its frightening story, terrifying environments, and exquisite use of full-motion video made it one of the best adventure game experiences I have ever had. Download the 133MB demo from our FTP server (if you can) at: *ftp.pcgamer.com/demos/rothdemo.exe*. You won't regret it!"



MICHAEL WOLF
DISC EDITOR

Longbow 2

★★★★ JANE'S COMBAT SIMULATIONS ★★★★

12

Last time we did a list of our all-time favorite games, *AH-64D Longbow* was the top-ranked sim. Since then, Jane's combat simulations has given us *Longbow 2*, a combat helicopter simulation that's bigger and better in every way. And yet, as sophisticated as it is, this is the air combat simulation we recommend most to people who are just getting into sims — a series of incredible hands-on tutorials make it that easy to learn. This game strikes the perfect balance between realism and fun — and its campaign model and multi-player support are examples that virtually every other sim developer should study.

Links LS '98

★★★ ACCESS SOFTWARE ★★★

11

This series of games just keeps getting better and better. When the long-awaited *Links LS 97* came out as a follow up to the amazing *Links 386*, players were blown away by the revamped graphics, reworked ball movements, and new terrain-building engine. Weather effects like fog, sunshine, rain, and wind are all impressively simulated. Enhanced gameplay options like stroke play, best ball, skins, and new multi-player options were also welcome additions. So, how did Access improve on something that was already excellent for the 98 edition? Simple — an enhanced color palette, quicker screen re-draws, more camera angles, and built-in TCP/IP support nudged this series a few inches closer to perfection. No other golf game has ever come close to challenging the dominance of the Links series, and when you play this latest version, you'll quickly see why.

Sam & Max Hit the Road

★★★★ LUCASARTS ★★★★

10

Four years after its release, this is still the best graphic adventure for the PC, hands down. It's also the funniest, owing to the fact that it's based on the truly hilarious Steve Purcell comic strip. Sam's a trench-coat-wearing dog, and Max is a cute but homicidal bunny — they're freelance police and members of the Coalition For the Responsible Abuse of Lethal Force. The game follows them on a cross-country search for a wayward sasquatch who's skipped out on the local carnival freak show. If the premise sounds weird, you should see the game. It's a hoot.

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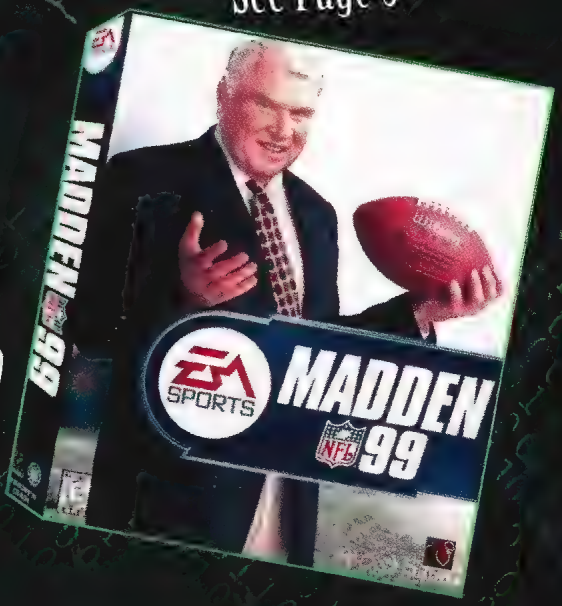
Trespasser
See Page 3

Command & Conquer
Tiberian Sun
See Page 5



Madden 99
See Page 3

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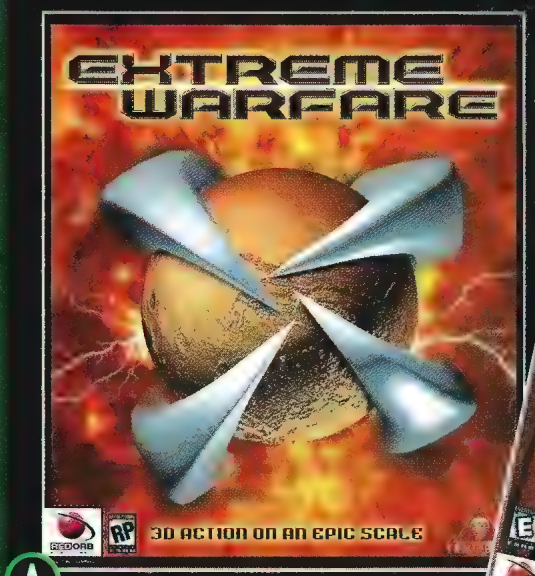

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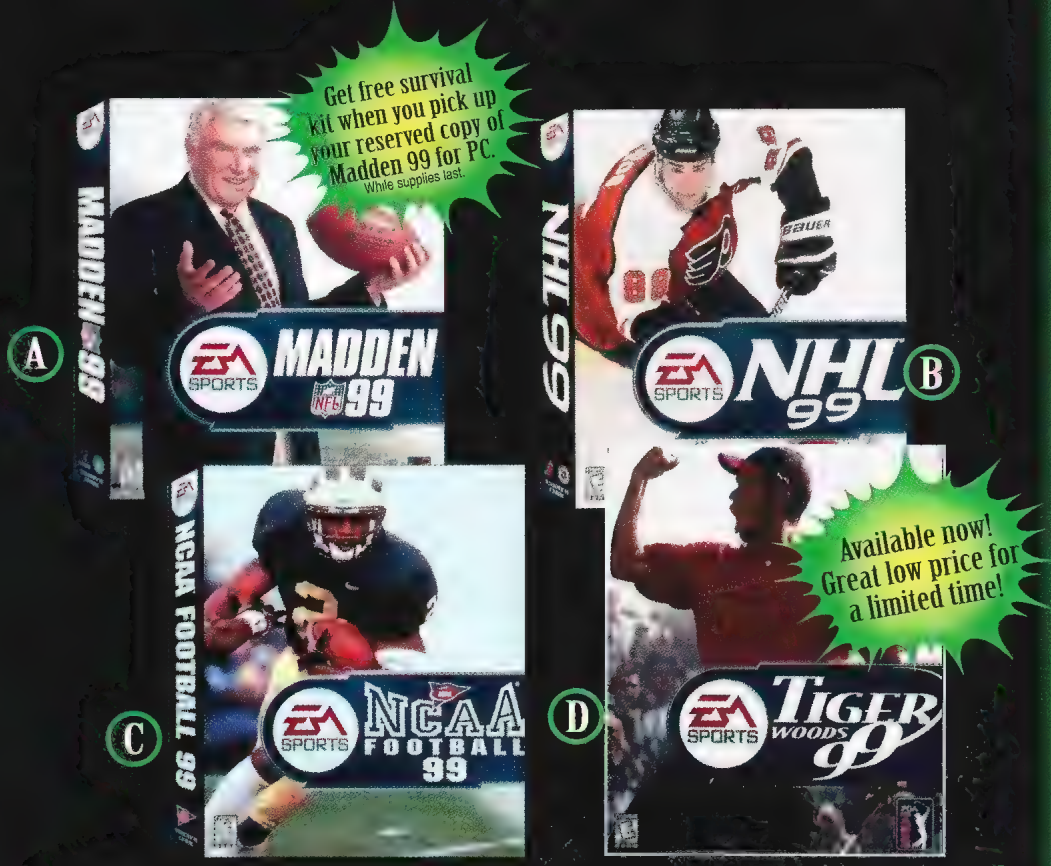
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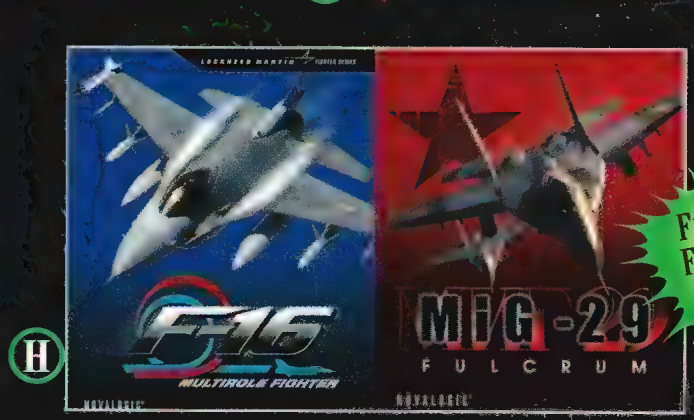

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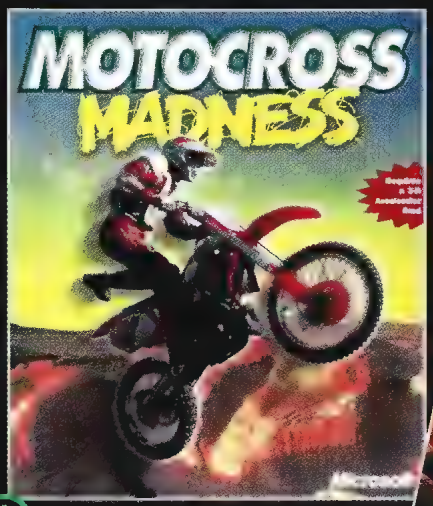

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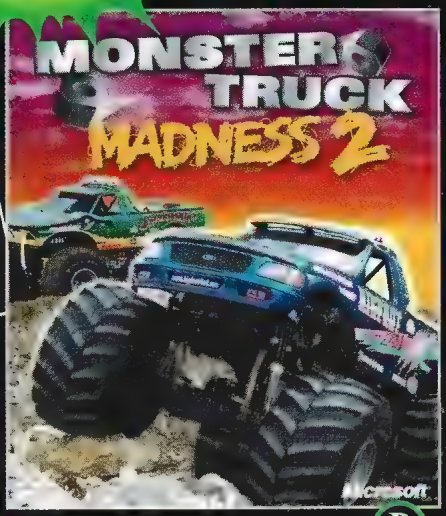

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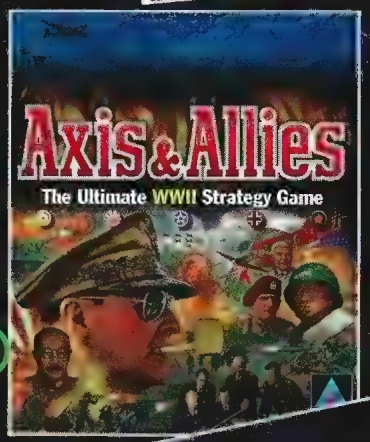

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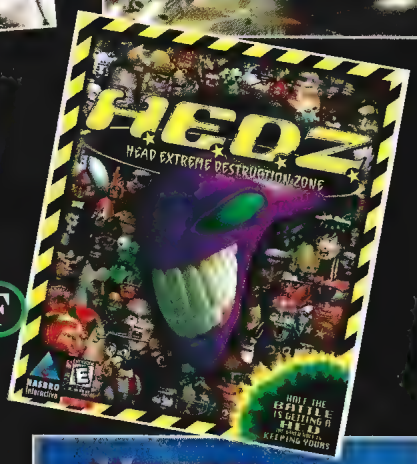

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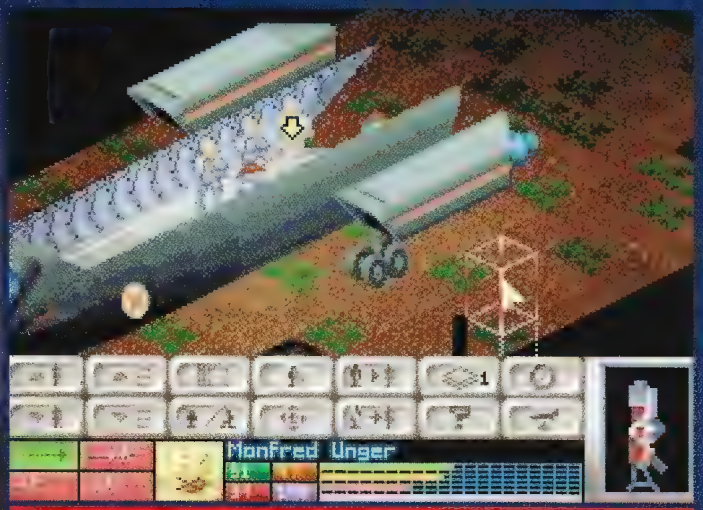
WarCraft II

★★★★ BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT ★★★★

The secret behind this huge real-time strategy hit is simple: Blizzard took an already great game, the original *WarCraft*, listened closely to gamers who were playing it, then incorporated virtually every improvement those loyal fans suggested. The result is a sequel that isn't just more of the same; it's bigger and better in every way. With its fantasy trappings and off-kilter humor, it also has more atmosphere and personality than any ten other real-time strategy games put together. Blizzard's own *StarCraft* has surpassed it in many ways, but there'll always be a warm place in our hearts for *WarCraft II*.

9



X-COM: UFO Defense

★★★★ MICROPROSE ★★★★

Four years after its release, MicroProse's turn-based masterpiece *X-COM: UFO Defense* still manages to seduce deadline-weary *PC Gamer* editors with its timelessly addictive gameplay. As the unseen director of an independent fighting force known as X-COM, you must deal with eliminating a growing alien threat by intercepting UFO incursions, building bases to house research teams, technicians, and soldiers, and researching alien technology to use against the ever-present threat. The heart of the game, of course, is its squad-based gameplay against the aliens themselves, and this nail-biting tactical game can still make even the most hardened armchair general jump in his or her seat.

8

Heroes of Might and Magic II

★★★★ NEW WORLD COMPUTING ★★★★

This is the most dangerously addictive turn-based strategy game in the history of PC gaming (with the possible exception of *Civilization II*). It has all the qualities of all those "just-one-more-hour" games we've sunk so much time into over the years: a deceptively simple surface that beckons you in, and amazingly complex inner workings that keep you playing as one new wrinkle after another reveals itself. *Heroes II* came out in late 1996, when the real-time strategy boom had already built a good head of steam — but it proved without a doubt that turn-based strategy can still be every bit as entertaining and engaging.

7

System Shock

★★★★ ORIGIN ★★★★

Of all the games on this "best ever" list, Origin's *System Shock* may be one of the highest placed, but it also holds the unfortunate distinction of being one of the least known and least played. Criminally overshadowed by the *Doom* craze when it was released in 1994, this science-fiction adventure had all of the ingredients to become a blockbuster, yet for reasons unknown, met with lackluster sales.

While it may not have burned up the sales charts, this amazing first-person action adventure quickly earned our respect as one of the finest games ever due to its seductive game design that blended a fantastic storyline with meaningful, suspenseful action in a way that has rarely been equaled. Brought to life with impressive graphics and great controls that were years ahead of its time, *System Shock* is still worth a look today — if you can find it.

6

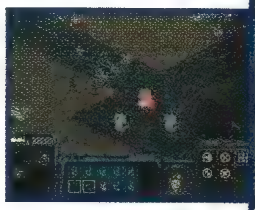
StarCraft

★★★★ BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT ★★★★

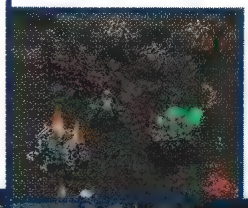
Never has a genre become so over-populated so quickly. The past year's real-time strategy "boom" has actually been more like a meltdown, as virtually every game company in the business has rushed to market with their own (mostly mediocre) attempts to cash in on the phenomenal success of the Command & Conquer and WarCraft series.

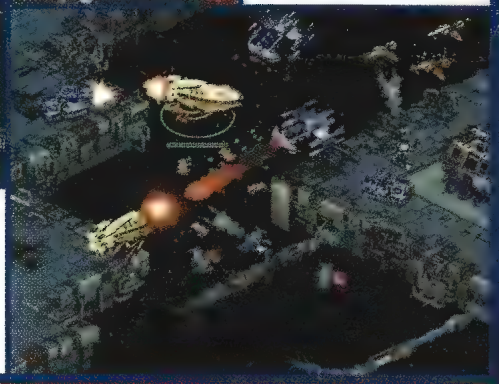
5

But in this genre like any other, the cream has a way of floating to the top, and like id in the 3D shooter realm and LucasArts in the adventure arena, the early pioneers, in this case Westwood and Blizzard, have fought off the competition and remained at the top of the heap.



After Westwood's *Red Alert* stole much of the attention away from *WarCraft II*, it was Blizzard's turn to return fire. The company certainly took its time with the much-awaited *StarCraft*, including a major engine overhaul early in the project. But the extra care and attention lavished on the project proved worth it, resulting in a game that was so much more than the "Orcs in Space" game many were expecting. Aside from an impressive new isometric layout and all the wondrous presentation we've come to expect from Blizzard, *StarCraft*'s main triumph was to create three unique and very different warring races, and then balance them brilliantly so that the gameplay changes drastically depending on the races you and your opponent choose to play. Terran versus Terran, for example, is a vastly different experience to Protoss versus Zerg. The manifold gameplay combinations make for a strategy game that continues to evolve and surprise many months after its release, and that currently represents the state of the genre's art.



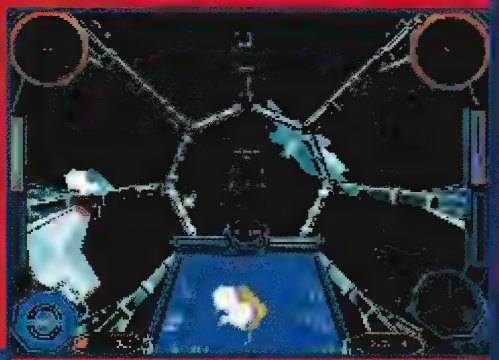


TIE Fighter Collector's CD-ROM

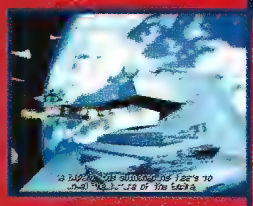
★★★★ LUCASARTS ★★★★

While it takes a slight drop down our list from its previous number one spot, LucasArts' amazing space combat simulation *TIE Fighter* is still one of the most highly regarded games here at the *PC Gamer* offices — the force is definitely still strong with this one. Released little more than a year after *X-Wing* brought the big-screen starfighter battles home to the PC, *TIE Fighter* quickly outpaced its predecessor by refining the interface, presentation, and overall quality to a razor's edge.

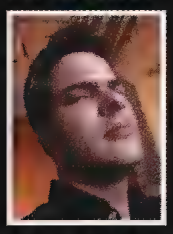
4



However, the real surprise came from the narrative twist. Played from the side of the Imperials, *TIE Fighter* put players in the cockpit of the bad guys, scouring the galaxy for the hated Rebel Alliance "terrorists" — but the difference was more than cosmetic. Flying unshielded and lightly-armed Imperial craft against heavily-armored Rebels and pirates gave players a new-found admiration for those black-suited TIE jockeys from the movie trilogy. Additionally, *TIE Fighter* made the most of its Star Wars connection with a robust selection of training exercises, missions, and campaigns that sent players dogfighting above such familiar pop icons as Star Destroyers and Corellian Cruisers, and in doing so imbued the game with almost unlimited replay value. Now updated and looking better than ever as part of the recently released *X-Wing Collector Series*, *TIE Fighter* is still an untarnished classic.



"While the advanced engine and moral story line of *Ultima Underworld* are great reasons to enjoy this classic, the reason I chose it as my stand-out game from the Top 50 is that it showed me a side of gaming I had been reluctant to delve into. I hate to admit it, but I wasn't always a big fan of roleplaying games. Yet, *UU* proved to be a great introduction to both the fantastic Ultima series and a genre I'd completely missed. It also showed me how great games could and should be made."



TODD VAUGHN

DEPUTY EDITOR

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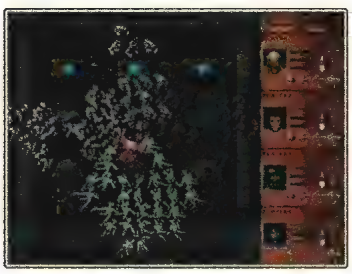

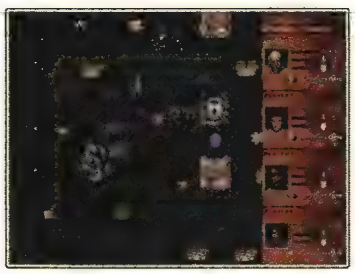

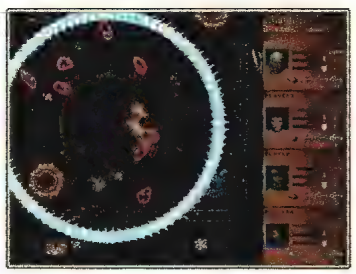

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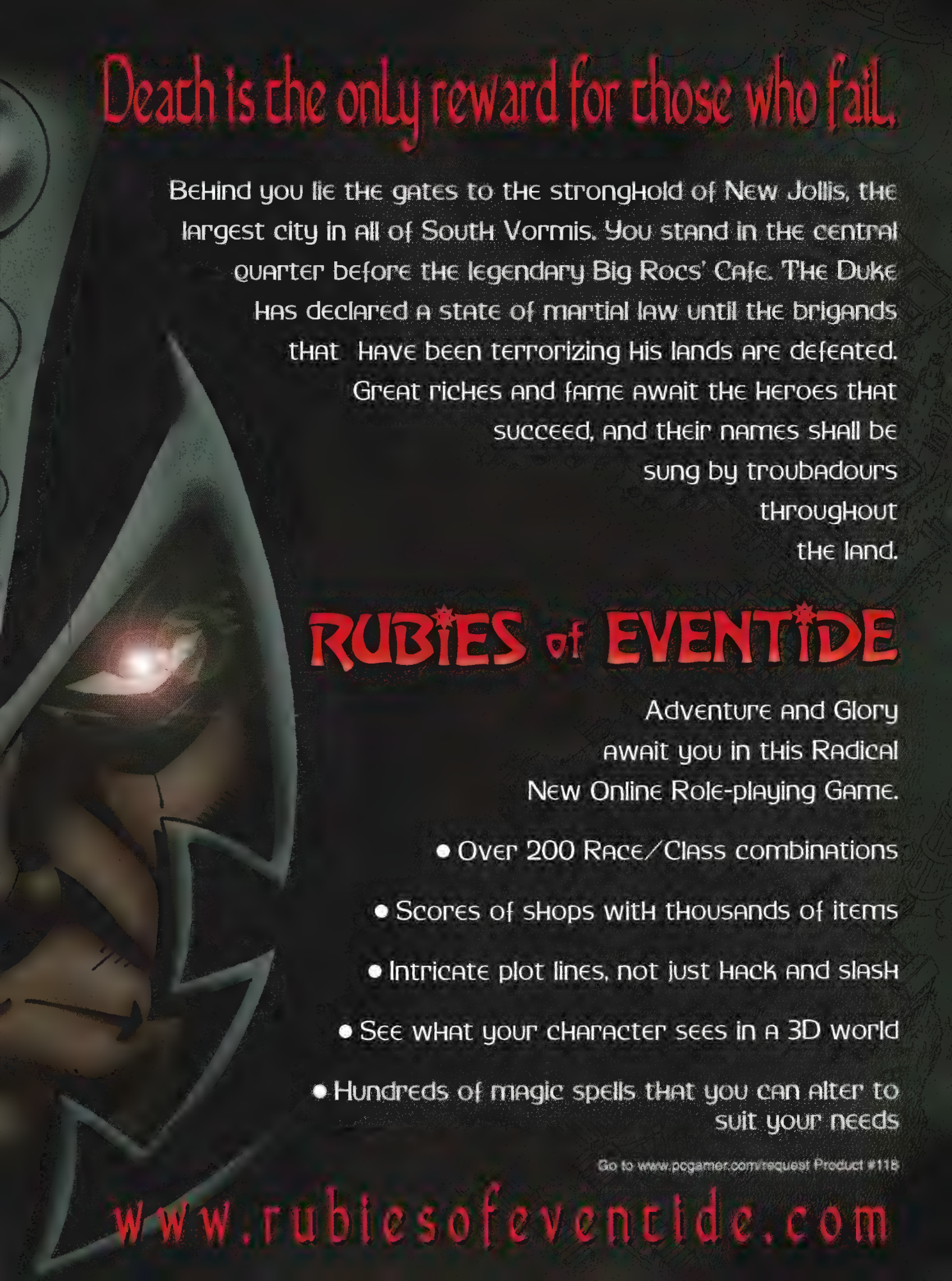
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Quake II

★★★★ ID SOFTWARE ★★★★

3

What's left to say? In the year since its release, id's sequel to the groundbreaking *Quake* has kicked the PC's most competitive genre into overdrive, pushed multi-player carnage to new levels, and attracted a community following unrivalled by any other PC game. With dozens of hard-core web sites updating daily with news of new player-created characters, levels, weapons, game rules, and other modifications, *Quake II*'s legions of users have elevated the game to almost surreal levels of popularity and devotion. To many, it's not just a game, it's practically a religion.

The reason? Even in the face of countless clones and cash-ins, *Quake II* remains the fastest, most action-packed, best 3D shooter ever, combining eye-popping graphics with firefights so bloodthirsty and intense that the more heavily occupied Internet levels resemble some kind of online slaughterhouse. But through all this carnage, *Quake II* retains a masterful balance of level design and weaponry which ensures that players with talent and guile will always beat out the sledgehammer tactics of all-guns-blazing maniacs. On the solo front, *Quake II*'s single-player game may not be as well-crafted as, say, *Unreal* or *Jedi Knight*, but its design is still strong and its atmosphere has a genuinely creepy "what's-around-the-next-corner?" feel.

There may be a game amongst the upcoming batch of "*Quake* killers" with the balls and the brains to beat out *Quake II*, but until that happens, id's gun-happy masterpiece is the most sensational and subtle shooter ever, and one of the best games of any type ever created.

Civilization II

★★★★ MICROPROSE ★★★★

2

There are few games that can be considered a genuine masterpiece — Sid Meier's *Civilization II* is one of them. It's so much more than just a sequel; it takes the original *Civilization* design and updates the feel of the game, retooling it with expanded options, and in the process creates something immeasurably superior to the original; a feat once considered impossible. A blending of history and fantasy, *Civilization II* takes the player on a tour of humanity's greatest triumphs and its most devastating tragedies. Never before or since has a game attempted such reach, such scope, and pulled it off so seamlessly.

Beginning with little more than a tiny band of settlers, the player must slowly raise his small tribe up out of the muck and turn it into a civilization that will take to the seas, the skies, and eventually the stars. Along the way, the player has control over his or her empire, which extends to quite staggering levels of intricacy and depth — the civilizations players create effectively become living things. The result is a game that pulls you in so deeply that you'll lose all track of time, forgoing sleep, food, friends, and yes, even TV.

If any one game can be held up as an example of game design as an art form, *Civilization II* is that game — intelligent, engrossing and entertaining beyond compare, it's one of the finest artistic achievements of the last decade.

"*Wolfenstein 3D* still stands out for me as a seminal gaming experience. Back then, no one could have imagined the revolution that id's game had started — they were too busy blasting Nazis! With its quasi-2D graphics and no multi-play, *Wolfenstein 3D* no longer compares to the likes of *Unreal* or even *Doom*, and so it didn't make this Top 50. But its cool story and those satisfying screams of 'Mein Lieben!' as you plugged another book-burner made this one of the most fun games of its time."

GARY WHITTA

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

PC Gamer Readers' 50 Best Games Survey Card

PC Gamer's 50 Best Games Ever: Are we talking out of our ass? If you think so, here's your chance to set us straight!

PC Gamer's "50 Best Games Ever" listing is always one of our most controversial features, and if you're one of the countless readers whose teeth are no doubt gnashing uncontrollably in anger and consternation in response to our latest Top 50, fear not — now it's YOUR turn to tell us what YOU think the list should look like!

To follow up on this month's list, we're inviting all PC Gamer readers to contribute to our Readers' 50 Best — the PC's best games ever, as selected by YOU — yes, YOU!

To be a part of this historic undertaking, all you have to do is fill out this little card with your all-time top 10 favorite PC games in order of preference. You have until October 31, 1998, to send this completed card to us, at which point we'll tally the scores and print the completed list in the January 1999 issue of PC Gamer.

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Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

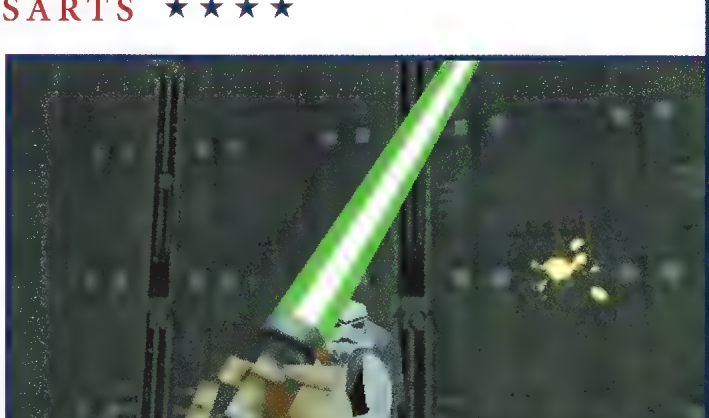
★★★★ LUCASARTS ★★★★

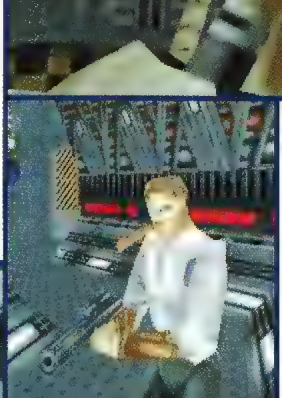
Some uncharitable folks will no doubt grouse that *Jedi Knight* has an unfair advantage. That we only chose it as our all-time favorite game because we were dazzled by its sights and sounds, by its music and settings — all taken from three of the biggest hit movies of all time.

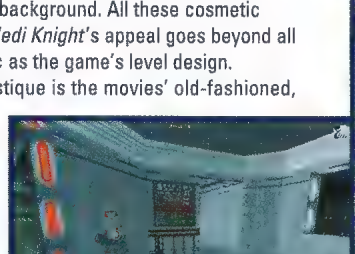
But if that's the secret of *Jedi Knight*'s appeal, then why do most games based on box-office blockbusters fall flat? Why did the *Jurassic Park* and *Men in Black* games suck? Because a hit movie license isn't nearly enough to make a great game. No, it's not the Star Wars elements that make *Jedi Knight* great — it's how the game's designers brought those elements to life.

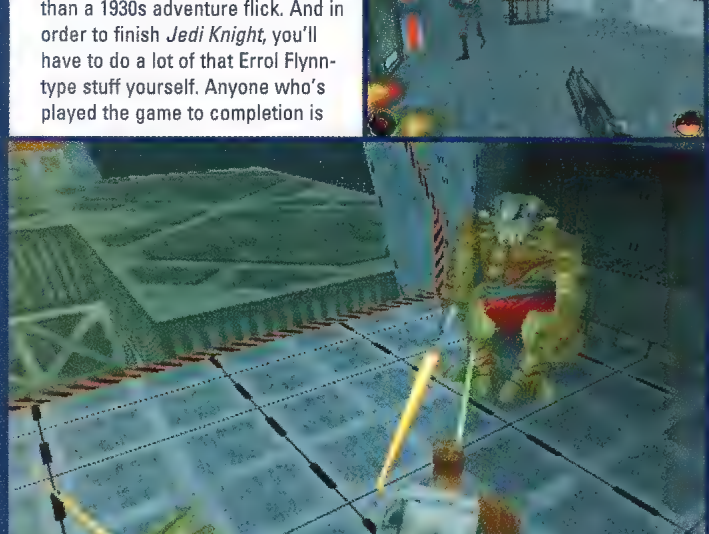
Even though it doesn't feature any of the characters that appeared in the film trilogy (unless you count all those stormtroopers), *Jedi Knight* creates the sensation of "playing the movie" better than any film-inspired game we've ever seen. It's not just the familiar sights and sounds, although it's certainly stirring just to fire up a lightsaber and hear that unmistakable, menacing hum, or fire a blaster at rank after rank of stormtroopers, all while some appropriately rousing or tense bit of John Williams' Oscar-winning orchestral score plays in the background. All these cosmetic touches are handled beautifully, but *Jedi Knight*'s appeal goes beyond all that, right down to something as basic as the game's level design.

A big part of the Star Wars mystique is the movies' old-fashioned, swashbuckling atmosphere. People seldom walked in these films — they sprinted, they swung on ropes, they made daredevil leaps...it was less like a science fiction movie than a 1930s adventure flick. And in order to finish *Jedi Knight*, you'll have to do a lot of that Errol Flynn-type stuff yourself. Anyone who's played the game to completion is









bound to have memories of harrowing moments that felt more like something out of a movie than the usual run-and-gun of less inspired first-person shooters. Who can forget the moment when the hero, Kyle Katarn, crosses a dizzying abyss between two Imperial buildings by riding the gusting air current from a huge ventilation tube? Or the last-second run and jump to get Kyle onboard the bad guy's ship before it leaves the fueling station? Or the heart-stopping sequence that has you running through Jerec's damaged ship while it disintegrates around you, with only seconds to find a way out before it smashes into the planet below? These are Star Wars moments, but *you* get to do 'em yourself! That's brilliant level design, folks.

Jedi Knight's single-player game is also bolstered by a coherent story that unfolds in some pretty impressive video cut-scenes. In this game, you're not just running through mazes that all look alike, in search of an exit — you always know exactly what you're trying to do and how it relates to the story. And each level has its own distinctive design, indoors and out. If you're in a fueling station, it by-god looks and sounds like a fueling station, and not a bit like the Imperial Palace you shot up earlier in the game.

The inability to set up dedicated multi-player servers that gamers can join and leave at will has kept *Jedi Knight* from being the kind of elemental force on the Internet that *Quake* and *Quake II* have become, but this game has some very strong multi-player support. The lightsaber and Force powers make a *Jedi Knight* deathmatch very different from other 3D shooters — and *Jedi Knight* also shipped with a very well-designed game of Capture the Flag.

More than any other game in recent memory, *Jedi Knight* is the one that never fails to impress even our non-gaming friends and family. That's probably because it's such a class act from start to finish that even people who know nothing about PC games can tell they're looking at greatness. It's a fantastic game, and one we never hesitate to recommend to any kind of gamer.

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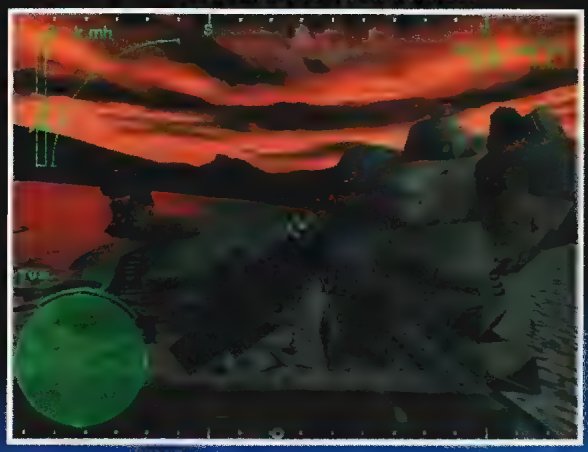

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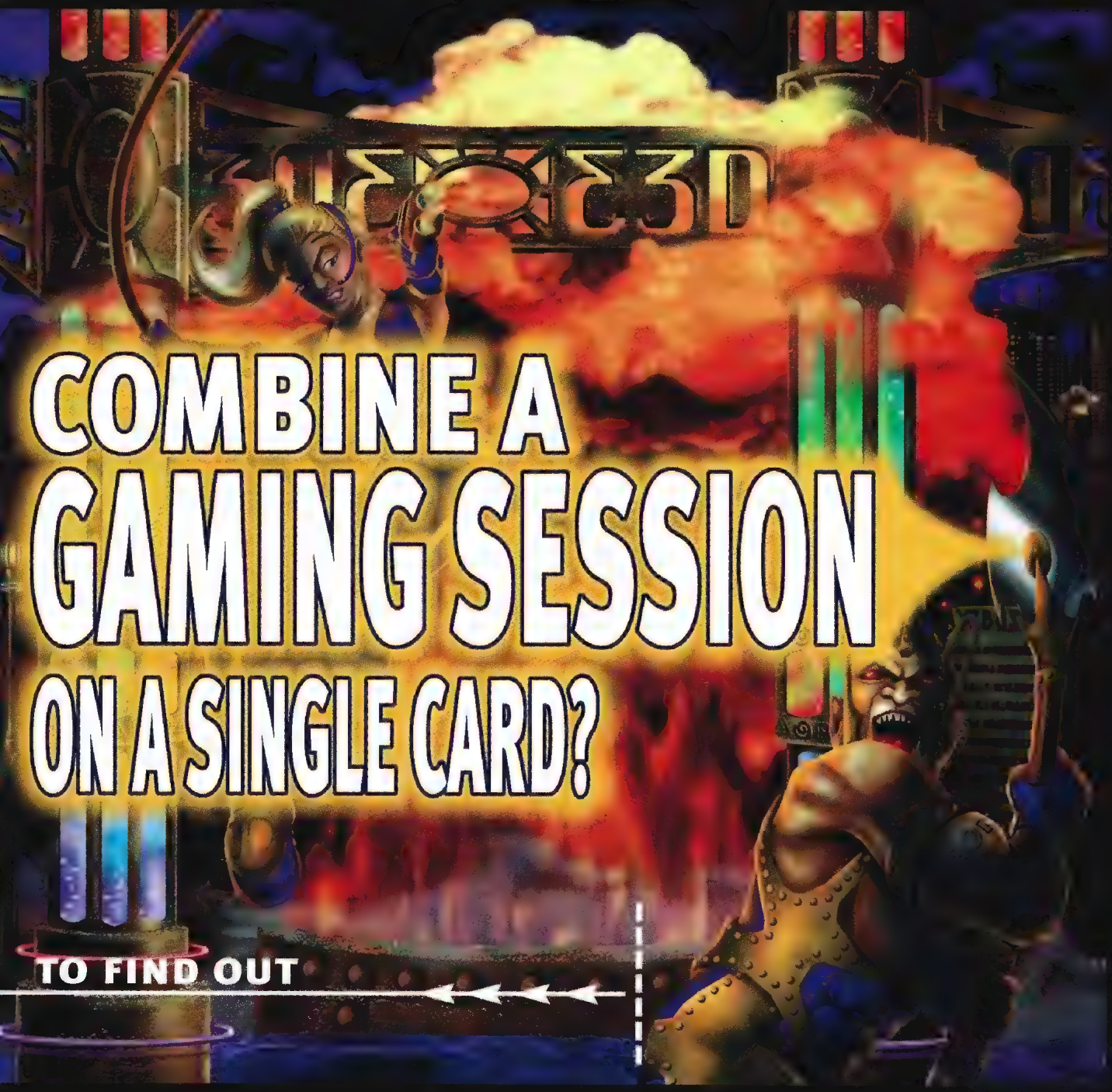

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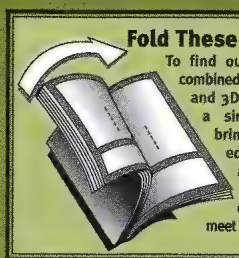

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AS MANY OF THE ESTABLISHED "BIG-NAME" DEVELOPERS BECOME TOO LARGE AND UNWIELDY FOR THEIR OWN GOOD, SOME OF THEIR BIGGEST TALENTS ARE BECOMING DISENCHANTED AND LEAVING TO FORM THEIR OWN INTREPID NEW TEAMS. WILLIAM R. TROTTER MET WITH FOUR AMBITIOUS YOUNG START-UPS WHO HOPE TO CARRY THE PC GAMING TORCH INTO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM.

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CAN A PLUCKY HANDFUL OF FINNS REALLY TURN THE WORLD GAME IS *MAX PAYNE*, DON'T BET AGAINST THEM...

It's a long, long way, pardner, from Garland, Texas, to Helsinki, Finland (where the weather, to put it mildly, is far more conducive to human existence this time of year), but the partnership between 3D Realms and Remedy Entertainment bridges the distance quite nicely.

3D Realms is, of course, the creator of one of gaming's most popular and outlandish characters, Duke Nukem. Remedy Entertainment, a brash but highly ambitious young Finnish company, is dedicated to producing high-octane action games that will aim for the same die-hard action/shooter audience that gobbled up the Duke with such bloodthirsty relish. Both companies are now affiliated with G.O.D., the Gathering of Developers, a revolutionary cooperative of some of the best-known virtuoso programmers in the industry. No development has shaken the PC gaming industry so violently since the introduction of the Pentium chip.

But the story of G.O.D.'s formation has been told elsewhere. And American gamers are, by now, quite familiar with 3D Realms and its amazing success story. If American gamers know Remedy at all, it's probably because of the legal thunderbolts hurled at the small Finnish company by LucasArts' stable of pit-bull lawyers, who recently threatened dire legal action if Remedy did not change its corporate logo — a stylized eyeball that bore a passing resemblance to that of LucasArts'.

Well, so does the DWANGO logo, not to mention Melbourne House in Australia, and God knows how many other small companies. Coincidence or rip-off?

Using its own proprietary engine built specially for the game, *Max Payne* may just have the technical chops to out-wow *Quake II*, *SiN*, *Unreal* and all the other 3D shooters.

Remedy's first effort, *Death Rally*, was released as shareware. It was good enough to catch the attention of many industry folks, including Apogee.

Doesn't matter, really, according to Remedy's president, Samuli Syvahuoko. "We made a decision to change our logo long before LucasArts' claims," he says. "We've never really thought that our logo properly reflects our corporate image of being a die-hard action game developer. Our original plan was to launch our new logo at ECTS in September. Now, we're simply accelerating the process a bit." Visit Remedy's website *www.remedy.fi* and you'll see a big "Logo Censored" notice. But by the time this feature sees print, the new logo should be in place and it won't look a bit like the Big Brother eyeball Lucas is so keen to protect.

So who *is* Remedy Entertainment and what can we expect from them in the future of an industry whose paradigm is currently verging on sheer anarchy?

Syvahuoko started out as a demo-fanatic. He loved to watch them, and design them, and he had a small circle of friends who were exceptionally good programmers and graphic artists. When Syvahuoko graduated from business school in 1995, he discussed with his cronies the commercial viability of starting a game development company (Finland was not exactly brimming over with them). Syvahuoko and friends decided that it was high time Finland found its place in the sun in the worldwide community of PC games. Remedy was founded on August 18, 1995, and now employs 19 people.

The little company struck paydirt with its very first product: a top-down racing game called *Death Rally* that took 13 months to develop from start to finish. The demo made the rounds; some 20 publishers looked at it before Apogee signed it up. Apogee released a shareware version that was a huge success

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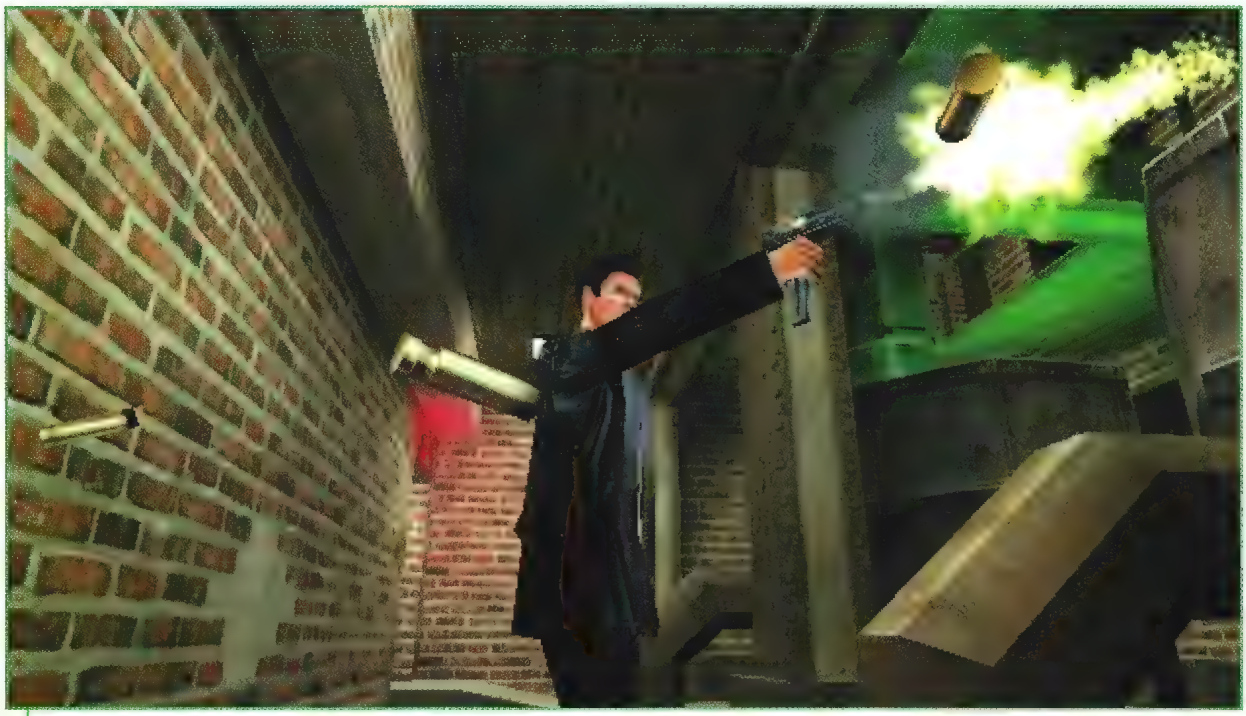

Boasting realistic weapon effects right down to the flying shell casings, *Max Payne* promises to be more brutal than most 3D games.

(It was number one on the Happy Puppy Top10 list for 13 straight weeks. Scott Miller, head of 3D Realms, describes it as, "a perfect warm-up game for a new company; a small, tightly focused project for a new team of developers," he says. "In my opinion, it's still the best top-down mini-car race game, much more fun to play than *Micro Machines*."

Retail marketing of the game was handled through GT Interactive, and was a respectable success, selling approximately 80,000 copies. Syvahuoko thinks it could have sold a lot more, but admits, "we gave away too much in the shareware version. But all in all, *Death Rally* was a great start for us," he says. "It proved to us, to Apogee, and to the outside world that Remedy can finish what it starts, and can be counted on to create games that are both high in quality and loaded with action-packed fun."

While Remedy was gearing up for its next game, *Max Payne*, in the summer of 1997, it was approached by VNU Business Publications, the largest European publisher of business-oriented computer magazines. VNU asked Remedy if they could produce a 3D benchmark for their Labs Division, a measurement tool for their reviews of 3D accelerators. The application, if successful, would also be included on the CD that's bundled with VNU's

The *Max Payne* storyline is told via comic-book interludes that are designed to help along the game's gritty, true-crime atmosphere.

magazines — with a Europe-wide circulation of 670,000 copies per month. It was, as the saying goes, "an offer not to be refused."

So *Max Payne* was set aside for three months, while Remedy stormed into this new venture. Code-named "Final Reality," the benchmark was astoundingly successful; it quickly became the de facto 3D benchmark app. and was one of the most bundled pieces of software in history: five *million* copies to date.

Syvahuoko explains this phenomenal *coup* thus: "It succeeded because we made the interface very easy to use, and the benchmark results easy to understand," he says. "And it just plain *looked good* in the way it presented the actual tests on-screen (a sort of combination of fast-paced music and a 3D computer game sequence). Basically, it filled an empty niche and appeared on the market at exactly the right time, when the whole 3D accelerator phenomenon was taking off like a rocket."

"Final Reality" was, in fact, so successful that Remedy (still a tiny company, mind you), established a subsidiary in November 1997, called "Futuremark," devoted exclusively to demo creation and 3D benchmark technology. "To date, Futuremark has created two 3D demos for well known 3D card manufacturers to use as showcases for the new hardware. However, as its main project, Futuremark is developing "3D Mark," which is the first true 'Gamer's Benchmark,'" Syvahuoko says. The product will debut this fall; interested readers can check it out at *www.3dmark.com*.

"I would also like to mention," says Syvahuoko, " that we have put extra effort into the creation of our game development tools. We have a separate team working full time on developing our own 3D engine and everything closely linked to it. This way we can make sure we always stay on top of the technology curve. All our proprietary technology is collectively called 'Max3D', and it's the basis for what you'll see in *Max Payne* — including

'MaxEd', which is a level editor that, we think, is very special. There are also many other components, like the radiosity rendering and the particle system."

Max Payne promises to give the action-shooter crowd something to cheer about. Max is a hard-boiled detective, much more on the order of Mickey Spillane's tough-as-nails Mike Hammer than Access's soft-hearted Tex Murphy. He's quick with his fists, his gun, and his language would make Duke Nukem blush. Max has a lot of attitude, and with good reason: some thugs slaughtered his entire family, and Max intends to pay them back with interest. Just to make things more interesting, Max has just been framed for killing his own boss, so he, too, is on the wrong side of the law.

To judge from the graphics we've seen, Remedy's done a knock-out job of depicting the seamy underbelly of New York City. Cut-scenes are rendered in a distinctive graphic novel style (you know: what used to be called "comic books"), that reeks of gritty atmosphere — this is the Bad Ol' New York that used to scare tourists away in droves.

Plot twists abound — giving *Max Payne* a depth and resonance found in few, if any, existing shooters. As you try to out-gun the bad guys, you'll uncover a government conspiracy, stone-cold Mob gunsels, corrupt cops, professional assassins, and politicians who might as well be wearing a "For Sale" sign.

The level editor looks to be something special, too. All levels will be 3D accelerated, and radiosity lighting, along with particle systems, should give level-designers a degree of fulfillment found in few, if any, competing titles.

Scott Miller of 3D Realms, says, "*Max Payne* represents a new direction for 3D action shooters not only by showcasing next-generation technology, but more importantly, by featuring meaningful characters, unpredictable plot twists, and ultra-realistic environments. These features are unique in a genre full of sci-fi and fantasy scenarios. We think Max will be an extremely interesting character, one who may well kick off a new franchise that will equal or surpass Duke Nukem."

Forget boring dungeons and crashed spaceships — *Max Payne* lets you dish out the hurt on the actual streets and back alleys of modern-day New York City. Do you feel lucky?

Syvahuoko echoes those sentiments. "We are trying to fill a neglected niche," he says. "Max is a third-person game, it's got a powerful storyline, it's got all the violence anyone could want in a shooter, but the biggest factor setting it apart from other games in the 3D action genre is the utter grubby realism of its setting. We strongly feel that gamers have been playing in dungeons and sci-fi castles long enough — they're ready to take a bite of the real thing."

In keeping with G.O.D.'s philosophy, *Max Payne* will be released "when it's ready, and not before," Syvahuoko says. "It's more than a one-shot game; it's the introduction of a set of characters who'll be seen in future games. Our goal is to develop an interesting world of characters and settings that will branch into other merchandising and media, the way Duke Nukem is now doing."

You're not really supposed to kill people inside a church, so best not pull your gun inside there. Oh, go on, then.

Interested in getting the Finnish perspective on things, we asked Syvahuoko for his opinion of the near-anarchic state of the industry, and if he thought there was a nascent revolution underway in the way games are created and marketed. "Yes!" he says. "The formation of the Gathering of Developers marks a new era, and I'm extremely excited that Remedy can be part of it. From the very start, we've been treated like rock stars, just as Mike Wilson predicted. Everything is going according to plan, maybe even better.

"Being with 3D Realms and the Gathering is a unique experience," Syvahuoko says. "It gives us the opportunity to focus fully on the development of our games, without worrying about some Marketing Department Suits telling us some crap about their 'vision of the game design'."

Having lived in Finland for an entire year (six months of winter can turn the most dedicated teetotaler into an alcoholic), I was curious as to the state of the computer gaming industry in that remote (but exquisitely beautiful and cultured) nation.

"Well, at the moment, there are two companies that can be taken seriously," says Syvahuoko. "One is Remedy, of course, and the other is Housemarque Games. So, really, the 'Finnish game industry' is very, very small. But we have artists and programmers as good as any in the world, so there is great potential for the future."

In the meantime, thanks to the computer, the population now has something to do during those endless, sunless, winter nights... other than drink and have lots and lots of sex. (Maybe that's why I fell so nostalgic about the place...of course, ahem, I spent my time reading Proust.)

With 3D Realms and G.O.D. on its side, we should be hearing a lot more from Remedy Entertainment in the future.

THE *PC GAMER* GENERATION NEXT FEATURE CONTINUES ON PAGE 146 WITH A LOOK AT PLANET MOON.

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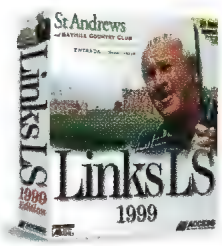

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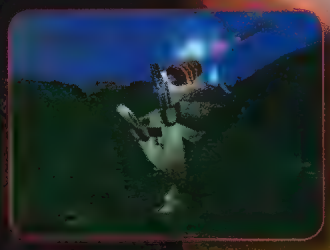

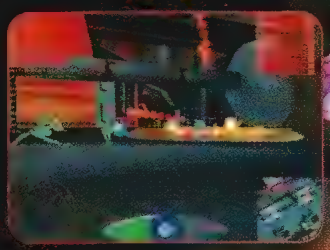

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Planet Moon

NOW FREE FROM THE SHACKLES OF THEIR FORMER
THEIR OWN RULES... AND ALSO MAKING A COOL NEW GAME...

If you visit the Planet Moon web site, you'll quickly discover that these six guys (in addition to having 100 years of collective experience in game developing) have a screwball sense of humor. Bob Stevenson, VP and co-art director, states that his ambition in life is "to live a Francis Ford Coppola lifestyle along with other colleagues, adding Planet Moon Wineries and Planet Moon Pictures to the existing stable of exciting ventures."

Not such a bad set of priorities, come to think of it.

But for the moment, of course, Planet Moon is concentrating on finishing its initial release *Giants: Kabuto*, a decidedly off-beat melange of fantasy, strategy, and butt-kicking combat, and a deserved pick as one our predictions for the Top 10 Games of 1999 (see last month's issue). These guys have certainly earned their chops in the world of 3D action — many of Planet Moon's members are former members of Shiny Entertainment, where they were instrumental in the creation of the hit *MDK*.

When we sent Planet Moon the questionnaire we designed for this feature, we got a round-robin response from Andy Astor (vice president), Nick Bruty (president and design director), and Stevenson. Their replies cover the territory so well that I see no need to paraphrase. So here's how the Q&A session went, verbatim (well, almost):

It's Kabuto himself, the king-daddy giant of Planet Moon's *Giants*, with a rather unfortunate fellow impaled on one of his horrible horns. That's gonna leave a mark.

PCG: WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FORM YOUR OWN COMPANY?

ANDY ASTOR: The official starting date was July 15, 1997. We did it for the usual reasons, expressed so eloquently by the guys at G.O.D. It was a chance for personal and professional growth, an opportunity we just couldn't pass up.

NICK BRUTY: Making games for the big houses generally means they end up owning everything you create, while you get a small cut off the top and are supposed to be grateful. It was time to stop giving our work away. Our only regret is that we didn't form Planet Moon earlier and retain ownership of *MDK*.

I've pretty much always been an independent developer, and spent the majority of

my freelancing at Probe Software. I think I was the first artist they ever hired. It was there that I met my friend Dave Perry. We continued to pump out games for Probe for several years, then we got a chance to move to California to work for Virgin Interactive.

At that time, development at Virgin was still small-scale and a lot of fun. Unfortunately, the company chose to follow an "expand, throw lots of games onto the market, and sell, sell, sell!" Soon, the company started to feel bloated and "corporate." The office space started being carved up into little Dilbertian cubicles, and the atmosphere changed so unpleasantly that we started referring to the building as "The Death Star." Things just weren't fun any more.

The turning point came for me when the development team created *Aladdin* in only three months! A monumental effort. Shortly thereafter, it became apparent that our efforts were not going to be rewarded. We had reached "the ceiling" at Virgin, and it was time to move on.

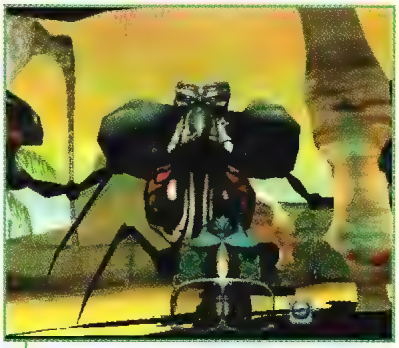
I moved on to Shiny Entertainment, which at that time was formed with just seven people. The first year was great; *MDK* was probably the most enjoyable project I'd ever worked on. When I was put in charge of *MDK*, I carefully hired people who shared my vision of a lean, mean, development team. But by the time *MDK* was actually released, Shiny, too, had succumbed to the bigger-is-better, crank out more titles, make more bucks, etc. The staff had grown from seven like-minded idealists to about 30 people, and the whole atmosphere had changed. The other guys had all gone through essentially the same progression of experiences and were suffering from the same sense of disillusionment. That's when we all got together and formed Planet Moon.

Our strength is focused on the creative process of game-making; you can always hire PR people and marketing experts when you need them. We are determined to stay small regardless of the financial opportunities that might tempt us into expanding and becoming the sort of company we rebelled against in the first place. Of course, that might change when we all get old and cynical or just desperate for cash....

PCG: WHAT'S PLANET MOON'S OVERRIDING PHILOSOPHY? IF YOU'RE SEEKING TO FILL A NICHE, WHAT MIGHT THAT NICHE BE?

BOB STEVENSON: Planet Moon's philosophy is simple: to make successful, original, games that excite the hell out of us and, hopefully, lots and lots of other gamers. The types of titles we're suited to create require 12-18 months of work. That's a big chunk out of anyone's life. So we challenge ourselves by designing games that are unique but will hopefully be big hits, both commercially and artistically. We're not trying to fill any particular niche — we just do whatever turns us on.

Even Kabuto won't mess with this little Smartie. He knows a valuable asset when he sees it. Protect and feed enough Smarties, and they'll reward you with power-ups.



New company, same unique visual style; fans of Shiny Entertainment's *MDK* will recognize its influence in the graphics of *Giants*.

PCG: WHAT'S THE LATEST ON *GIANTS*? IS IT NEAR COMPLETION? WHAT'S THE RELEASE DATE?

ASTOR: Judging percentage of completion is always a difficult task. In elapsed time, we're probably two thirds of the way. But in terms that are usually the yardsticks used by the industry as a whole, we're at about 25 percent completion. The discrepancy is due to the acceleration curves and the fact that new game development proceeds at a very uneven pace — some days we're really cranking, and then some days we're struggling over some nasty little problem we didn't know we had 24 hours earlier.

Giants will stand out, I think (and the early press response seems to confirm this) because it's got great graphics and animation, and it gives you three dramatically different races to play. You want magic, we got magic. You want weird and interesting new technologies, we got 'em. You want to play as a savage brute, go right ahead and do it! Kabuto, for instance, is a gigantic beast created by the Sea Reapers to defend them. He's a treacherous monstrosity, and ten times bigger than any other characters in the game — he can, and often does, swallow opponents whole. We're looking at an early spring '99 release, and we won't cut any corners to make some bureaucratically-imposed deadline. When it goes out the door, it will be as bug-free as we can possibly make it.

PCG: ARE WE SEEING A NASCENT REVOLUTION IN THE WHOLE PROCESS BY WHICH GAMES ARE CREATED AND MARKETED? A BACKLASH AGAINST THE BEAN-COUNTERS WHO WANT THE GAME SHOVELED OUT THE DOOR BY THANKSGIVING, EVEN IF IT'S STILL BASICALLY A BETA VERSION?

STEVENSON: I think so. A lot of publishers are realizing now, in much the same way the music industry came to understand decades ago, that it's far more potent to promote the artists and the games bearing their names, than the company logo. I mean, you don't walk into a bookstore and say, "Give me the latest thing published by Random House." And the gamers, the ones who plunk down their hard-earned cash for these products, are *obviously* more interested in the people that create the games than they are in the companies that market and distribute them.

I think this industry is still too young for the word "backlash" to be appropriate. This is just a natural evolutionary phase. And the publishers who don't "get it" are always going to try and shovel their crap games into the stores and

If its exotic setting and the creatures that populate it are any indication, *Giants* will be one of 1999's most original games.

pray to God that one or two big hits will carry the financial weight of the mediocre stuff. It that sense, it's analogous to the movie industry.

PCG: ANY FURTHER PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS YOU'D CARE TO MAKE ABOUT THE CURRENT AND FUTURE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY?

STEVENSON: Well, judging by what we saw at E3, this industry needs a big, fresh, reviving shot of new ideas. Too many sequels …too many clones.

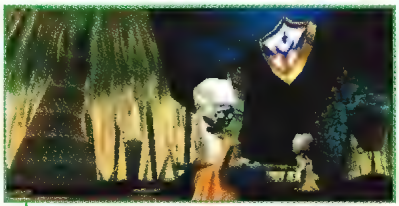
ASTOR: I'd like to feel that Planet Moon and some of the other maverick new companies are going to prove that you can avoid me-too, cookie-cutter games and still create a commercially successful hit. PR hype still does work to a certain extent, although the consumers are finally getting wary. As long as Big Money drives the industry, though, the overkill hype will continue.

PCG: ONE LAST QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE LONG-RANGE GOALS OF PLANET MOON AND WHERE DO YOU HOPE TO BE TWO OR THREE YEARS FROM NOW?

BRUTY: This may sound strange, but we'd like to be in about the same place we're in now — but with more cash coming in, of course. Creatively, we'd like to help raise the public's perception of what games *can be*. How do we do that? Hell, we don't know! But part of the fun for all of us lies in the experimentation. Expect to see some unusual and groundbreaking stuff from us in the future.

THE *PC GAMER* GENERATION NEXT FEATURE CONTINUES ON PAGE 152 WITH A LOOK AT RELIC.

Does this Meccaryn have any idea what's lurking behind him? That big, ugly mother can't mean him any good, can he? This could be a really bad day for him.



Check out the big brain on this Smartie as he watches for trouble. Detailed animation promises to be a *Giants* hallmark.

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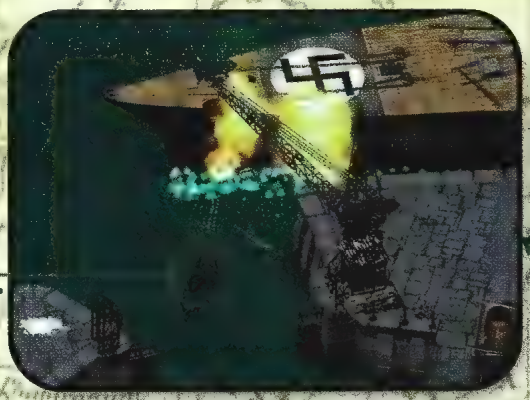
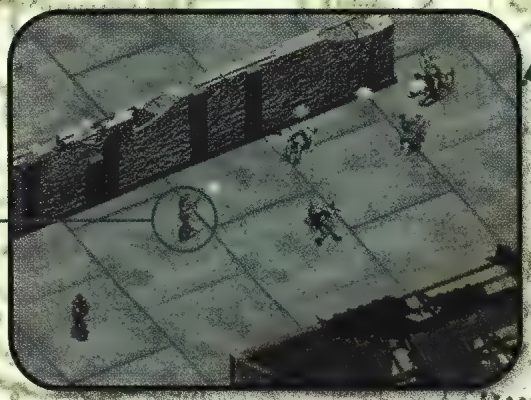


TREAD

Not always satisfied with being the get-away driver, you allow Tread to hone his skills in close combat. He considers it R&R.



SPOOKY

Your finest draft pick, this former French spy master leads a raid on an unsuspecting Nazi U-Boat. Use him widely for infiltration and sabotage missions.

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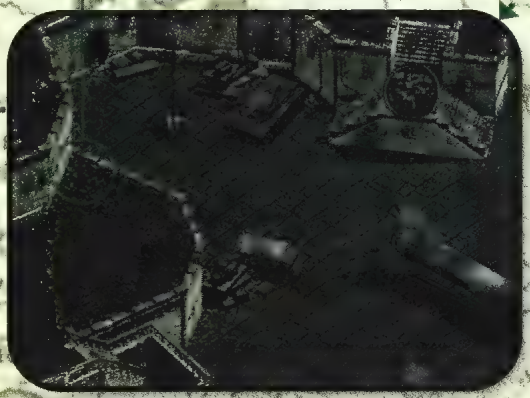
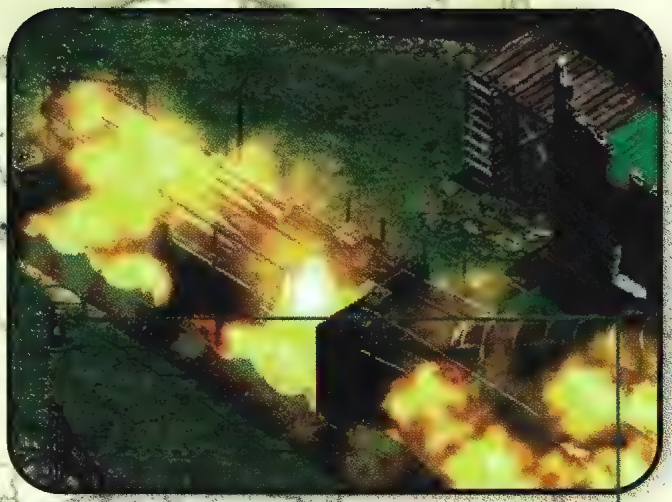
DUKE

Call in your sniper to weaken enemy fortifications and expose this Nazi stronghold to a weapons raid. To him every Nazi looks like the one that took out his family.





You send in your pyro lovin' munitions expert to take out enemy mobile missile capability. Apparently, there's plenty of dynamite to go around.

INFERNO

TINY

When the going gets tough, you send in your fiercest warrior to finish the job. Tiny takes out a communications center without the usual supporting cast.

COMMANDOS

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"A real-time strategy sleeper."—Computer Gaming World.
"Excellently rendered terrain and brilliant AI make this a fantastic combat simulation."—Gamespot

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Relic Entertai

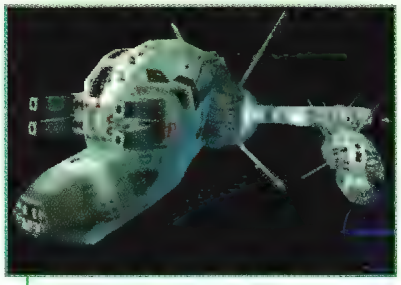
WITH ONE OF THE MOST ANTICIPATED GAMES OF THE YEAR POISED TO MAKE ONE OF THE BIGGEST DEBUTS IN YEARS...

Talking to Alexander Garden, president of Relic, gives the impression of speaking to someone much older than his 23 years. He is articulate, thoughtful, tightly focused on his vision, and he doesn't use the word "cool" in every other sentence. Evidently, the executives at Sierra Studios got the same impression, because Garden sold them on Relic's initial game, *Homeworld*, on the basis of two posterboards and an impassioned sales-pitch.

"When I was ten or eleven," Garden says, "I had a paper route — in Canada — through waist-deep snow. God, I hated it. But when I got paid, I made a magical journey down to the local video game store. The feeling I got when I walked in was incredible, like setting forth to explore a new planet. And the games were *good* — in those early Nintendo days, they had to be because the graphics and sound were so primitive. I still have fond memories of playing *Metal Gear*, *Metroid*, and all the Zelda games. The untainted purity of the game industry in those days was amazing."

Nowadays, says Garden, when he walks into Babbages and asks "Anything really good come out this week?", most of the time the reply is "Not really."

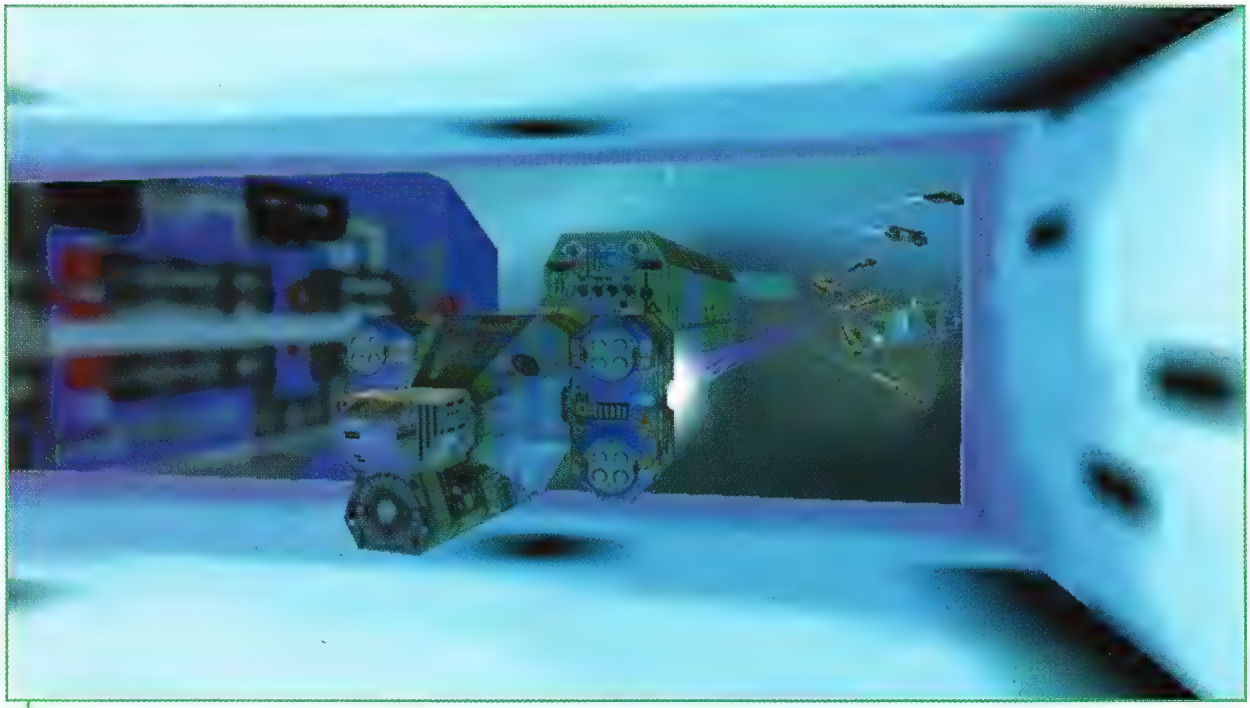
"Look at the statistics," Garden says. "Eight thousand titles released last year and maybe five or six of them were really top-notch! I know of one company that's issuing *sixty* games next year, and I cannot believe they don't realize that all but three or four of them will be utter crap!"



Every ship in *Homeworld* features weapon systems and track and move independently of the ship's main body, adding to the realistic look.

Garden got his foot in the game development door by submitting a totally bogus resume to Distinctive Software (the Canadian arm of Electronic Arts). Fortunately, his work on *Triple Play Baseball* demonstrated to all that he had the necessary chops to back up that resume. With a hit game under his belt, Garden's career was launched. Relic officially opened for business, in Vancouver, on May 15, 1997 — with no office, no staff, and a couple of borrowed computers. Now the company has a 12,000-square-foot office and 22 full-time employees.

"I started Relic because I want to make games that give today's players the same incredible rush I got when I was eleven," says Garden. "It's time to raise the bar, raise the level of quality throughout the whole industry. My inspiration is my good friend Peter Molyneux; we share the same ideals, have essentially the same vision. It's entirely possible that the salvation of this industry will come from small companies like Relic, in partnership



Relic hopes that the action in *Homeworld* will remind people of the massive interweaving space dogfights of the Star Wars trilogy.

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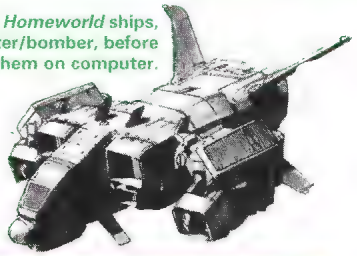

Relic sketched its *Homeworld* ships, like this R2 fighter/bomber, before rendering them on computer.

with a publisher like Sierra Studios. The way Sierra has restructured, forming smaller corporate 'cells' to work with groups like us, is a paradigm whose time has come."

Garden gets impatient when "creative types" put all the blame on "The Suits." "Developers are always whining about how 'they' set unrealistic deadlines, micro-manage, displayed ignorance of the games, etc.," he says. "The Suits are too convenient a target for *other* factors that are wrong with this business. Typically, you've got 30 people working for two years to hit a moving target that's supposed to perform flawlessly on 65,000 different PC configurations. Frankly, not many developers can do that. But since not many developers have $5 million in their pockets, they have to be funded by someone who has faith in them. The Suits invest; they give you the capital to do something you'd enjoy doing anyway, and they take the big risks. All they ask is that you give them a decent product by a certain date, and if it's a hit, they share the profits with you. Personally, I don't see it as a bad deal, and I think the whole phenomenon has been blown way out of proportion."

Sierra Studios has given Relic total commitment; the funds, the marketing expertise, and, yes, the time to fully realize *Homeworld*'s potential. And let it be understood that *Homeworld* was one of the few products demonstrated at the last E3 show that towered above the prevailing mediocrity.

Homeworld is classic space opera on a heroic scale. "Yeah, it's real-time," says Garden," but so what? We studied every good RTS game out there and I think we've eliminated most of the things people find annoying about them. Even turn-based curmudgeons are going to get sucked into this game!"

Garden admits he's after a gosh-wow-how'd-they-do-that? *Star Wars* effect, but the real inspiration for the game goes back to the cult TV series *Battlestar Galactica*. Basic premise: you're a member of a benign, peace-loving civilization, dwelling on a lush, utopian planet. Over the span of a few centuries, you notice another race starting to encroach on your outer worlds. The aliens spurn all diplomatic overtures, nuke a few of your planets, and drag you into a war you can't possibly win.

Then, they subject you to their version of the Final Solution by packing your entire population into giant ships and dumping everyone on a remote world at the edge of the galaxy — after first liquidating all your intellectuals, scientists, artists, and teachers.

The survivors lose all but the dimmest memory of their pre-holocaust civilization; all that remains is a sentient crystal fragment,

With incredible explosions and individual vapor trails for every ship, *Homeworld* looks like it could become one of the best reasons to own a 3D accelerator this holiday season.

It may look like a shooter, but *Homeworld* is in fact a massive real-time strategy game set against the three-dimensional backdrop of deep space.

which assumes the form of an angel (a cross between the Rosetta Stone and Joan of Arc). This artifact points you toward your "Homeworld" and gets you jump-started. After that, you bootstrap your technology until you have an armada powerful enough to take on the aliens and win back your part of the galaxy.

The incredibly immersive, action-packed 3D battle scenes that *PC Gamer* saw at E3 were knock-outs. If this is what Relic means by "raising the bar," they certainly seem to be on the right track.

Garden is reluctant to discuss other games in the pipeline. "We won't demo anything until it looks so good that people who see it gasp 'Holy shit!'," he says. But he did close our interview with a very, very provocative prognostication: "The amount of time and money it takes to develop a good game in 1998 is four times what it was in 1994," Garden says. "The amount of work and financial commitment has increased fantastically. Faster, in fact, than the industry as a whole, and developers in particular, can keep up with. The consumers' expectations have become decidedly unrealistic. Eventually, however, the technological curve is going to flatten out; there'll come a time beyond which more speed and processing power and graphics acceleration simply won't make any discernible difference, and *that's* when you see the emphasis come back to *gameplay*, just as it was in the days of *Zork*, when there were no technological hassles at all.

"When we reach the point where everybody has the same level of technological goodies to play with, it will be the Great Equalizer," he says. "Once again, the *games* will rule! We at Relic would like to think of *Homeworld* as a friendly challenge to the rest of the industry, one that will nudge everybody in that direction."

From what we've seen of the game, "nudge" is an understatement.

THE *PC GAMER* GENERATION NEXT FEATURE CONTINUES ON PAGE 157 WITH A LOOK AT MONOLITH.

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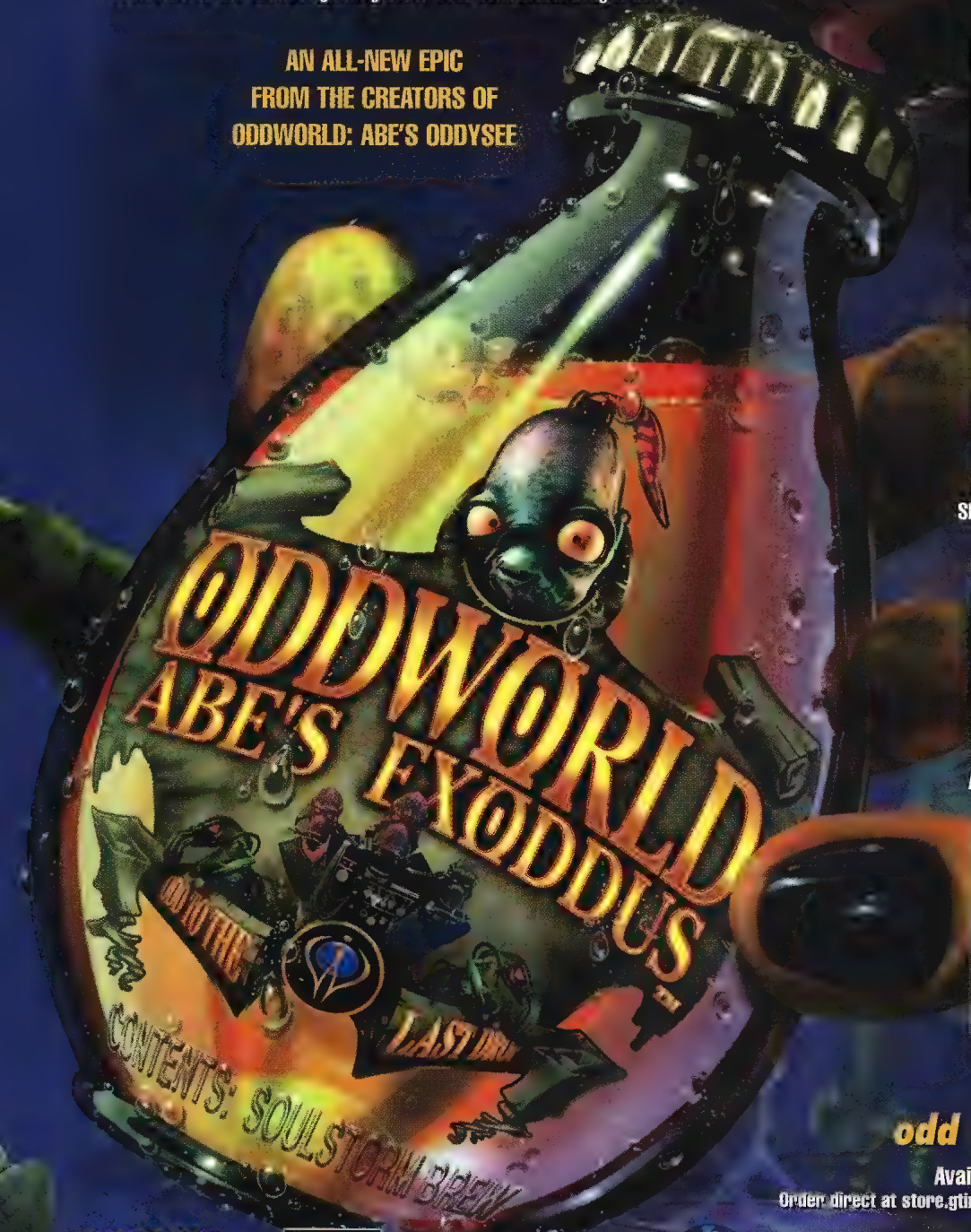

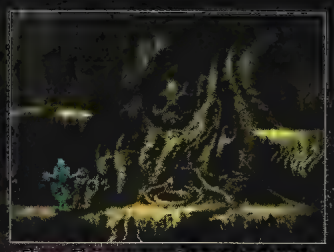

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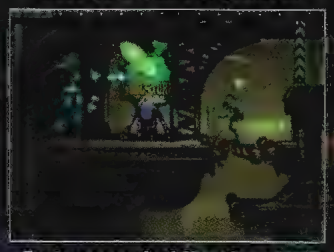

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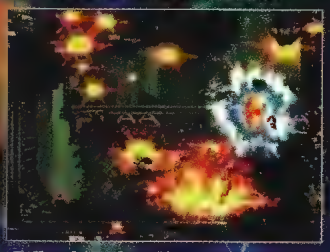

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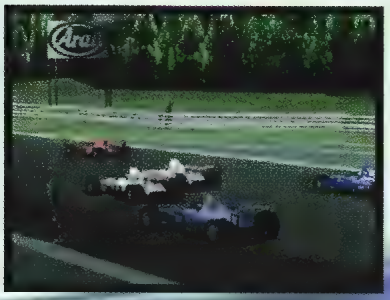

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Monolith

THEY CAME FROM NOWHERE! THEY HELPED CREATE DIRECT-X! JUST WHO *ARE* THESE GUYS, ANYWAY?

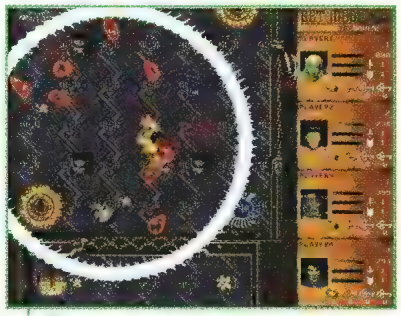
When it comes to the subject of new, ambitious, independent, start-up game companies, the magic numbers seem to be "6" and "7". That's probably the minimum number of developers necessary to create a first-rate game *and* still take care of the less entertaining, but all-too-necessary chores of running a viable business.

So Monolith, too, comprises seven people: CEO Jason Hall, and fellow game-lovers Bryan Bouwman, Brian Goble, Toby Gladwell, Garrett Price, and Paul Renault. All have many years of hard-won experience in the industry, gained by putting in plenty of blood-sweat-toil-and-tears hours of work for such companies as Broderbund, Swifte, SSI, 3D Realms, Squaresoft, Sierra, and Microsoft.

The company's ultimate goal is not modest; as it states at the head of its web site: "We want to raise the standards of entertainment through multiple mediums — software, music, soundtracks, movies — you name it, we can do it, and do it better than anyone else."

Tall words, but then, Monolith's track record (for a company only three years old), is remarkable — let's not forget that this is the company that came from nowhere to surprise everyone with *Blood*, one of the better (and certainly one of the most gory) 3D shooters of 1997. As a result of its success with that title (a sequel is now in the works), it has managed to lure some potent talent away from the security and relatively high salaries of more established companies in exchange for the risks of do-or-die independence. The reason is simple, and it runs like a Wagnerian *leitmotif* throughout all the profiles of small companies found in this issue: creative freedom. CEO Jason Hall explains it this way: "We empower our employees, giving everyone a stake in the product," he says. "Sure, we have artists, engineers, game designers, testers, webmasters, the usual cast of characters, all of whom have specific and important roles in the company. But everyone throughout the company is also encouraged (and believe me, they do!) to participate in the development process. We are all hard-core gamers, and we make games for a hypercritical audience — ourselves!"

The working motto seems to be: *If it sucks, tell somebody! If it's lame, speak up!* Naturally, this kind of give-and-take puts an occasional bruise on somebody's ego, but everyone is committed to company-wide excellence to such a passionate extent that if the whole team ends up being happy with the final results, chances are the consumer will be, too.



The top-down action adventure *Get Medieval*, reviewed this month on page 215, is Monolith's tribute to the Atari coin-op classic *Gauntlet*.

Several of Monolith's founders became friends early in their careers, when they were working for an educational software development/publishing company. The products they helped to create were good enough to win several industry awards and accolades. But generally speaking, all were in agreement that creating childrens' educational software

Shogo: Mobile Armor Division should be a dream come true for people who like 3D shooters and Japanese animation — this title blends the two together seamlessly.

was not challenging enough; and it sure as hell wasn't as much fun as doing creative work for an adult audience. Says Hall, "Curiously, though, what we all found inspiring were the cool European 'demos" we downloaded from the 'net. Demo groups like 'The Future Crew' and 'Triton' were pushing the graphics envelope as far as it was possible to do, given the PCs and graphics cards of the time. They were a flurry of sights and sounds, essentially computer graffiti, that demonstrated not only programming skill but truly stimulating creative possibilities."

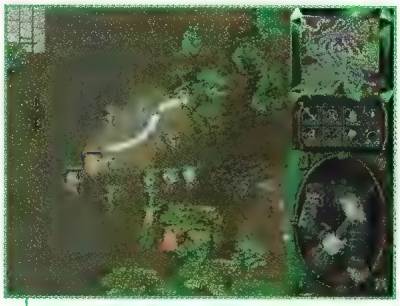
Once a year, all these European demo groups would hold an expo in Finland (there's that Finnish connection again! Must be something in the water…) and compete to show who had the most skills. Monolith decided to enter, participate, and win. Other companies were still mostly demonstrating DOS-based showpieces. Monolith decided that its hook would be Windows-based (Windows 3.1, at that time) presentations.

"We made a bunch of cool little Windows-based demos that did stuff no one thought possible in Windows," says Hall. "When we saw how impressed the competition was, we ran off about 1,000 CDs and sent them out to our friends and contacts in the industry. As fate would have it, one of those 'Monolith CDs' made the rounds at Microsoft and a lot of people were impressed by what we could do with Windows 3.1. They contacted us and asked if we might be interested in working on a 'top secret' project they were planning to launch right after Windows '95. That 'top secret' little project turned out to be called 'Direct X' and they needed a sampler/demo disc. So Monolith was created out of love for creative games and technical expression, out of friendship, and out of sheer circumstance."

I asked Hall, as I had asked representatives of four other new companies, for a succinct description of his company's basic philosophy. "It's really twofold. First, and most important, we don't work *for* each other, we work *with* each other," he says. "A software company is 100 percent people, it has to be or it won't create 100 percent games. At Monolith, this is acknowledged as much as humanly possible. We strive to be family-oriented and we encourage participation as much as we can.

"The other part of our philosophy — which really compliments what I just said — is that, whatever we make, it needs to be *fun*," Hall says. "Our products don't have to be the Second Coming, or the latest, greatest, whiz-bang, need-a-new-CPU-and-3D-card super-program. They just need to be high quality and fun to play. Crazy at is may sound, we want people to feel they're getting their money's worth when they buy one of our games, that they're getting a full measure of fun for their dollar. So that's our marketing plan, pure and simple: deliver high-quality, fun-to-play games."

Monolith's latest game, *Get Medieval*, is reviewed this month, but the real excitement right now is centered around the company's



Monolith's *Rage of Mages* attempts to blend roleplaying with real-time strategy — check out the playable demo on this month's *PC Gamer CD*.

upcoming title *Shogo*, a first-person, story-driven, action saga that brings the Japanese *anime* style to full bloom. Hall promises "two modes of action — on foot and in mechs, transformable robots, dismemberment and disemboweling galore," he says. "If you liked *Robotech* or *Neon Genesis: Evangelion*, this game's going to put a smile on your face! It will also be the first game to use the newly completed LithTech engine (formerly known as 'DirectEngine'), and it will truly be state of the art in terms of graphics and animation."

Farther down the pipeline is a game called *Rage of Mages*, which Hall believes will be the first successful merger of a real-time strategy game and a full-fledged RPG. "It's *WarCraft II* meets *Diablo* somewhere in *Ultima*. The game will boast a huge amount of painstaking detail, including true 3D terrain, highly original spells, and more than 300 weapons."

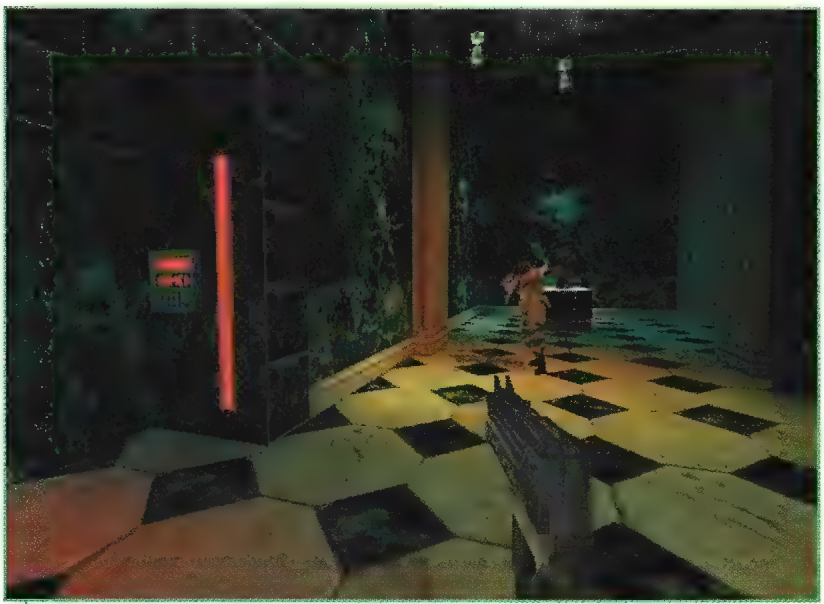
At this point in the interview, it is time for the crucial are-we-seeing-a-revolution in-the-making question we'd been asking everyone else. Hall's reply is cautious and thoughtful: "This is an industry where high-tech advancements and business models change all the time," he says. "As games get more and more technically advanced, and gamers attempt to play them on machines with hundreds of different configurations, and with new gee-whiz components becoming available with each passing month, it simply is becoming almost impossible to put out a bug-free game on the first try. I'm maybe giving people too much of the benefit of a doubt, but I think the image of MBAs in Armani suits forcing unready games out the door at gunpoint has become far too much of a cliché.

"One thing I *do* know, is that developers are going to have to get a tighter grip on their production schedules," Hall says. "It's essential for any business to be able to keep a handle on completion dates and accurately anticipate slippage. That's become very hard to do because the technology always seems to be one step ahead of you. In time, perhaps, that will even out and the problem may just take care of itself."

So, finally, how does Monolith see itself in relation to the Big Picture of the industry as a whole? On this matter, Hall is agreeably optimistic, "Despite popular belief, this industry is still open to the newcomer," he says. "Monolith, through sheer hard work and a dash of good fortune, has managed to come out of nowhere, find backers, develop strong titles, find some awesomely talented people to work with, and is now in a position to start publishing its own games.

"What this says, is that if you're willing to work hard enough, you at least have a fighting chance, and a chance is all you need to make it in this world," says Hall. "I think, as we all do, that Monolith has a good chance to produce games that are both great fun to play and profitable for their creators. If we can do that, our collective efforts will pay off in happiness for us, black ink in the account ledgers, and recognition from the game-playing public."

PCG



Blood 2: The Chosen uses Monolith's proprietary LithTech engine, which the company is also putting to work on *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*. Both games look mighty tasty...

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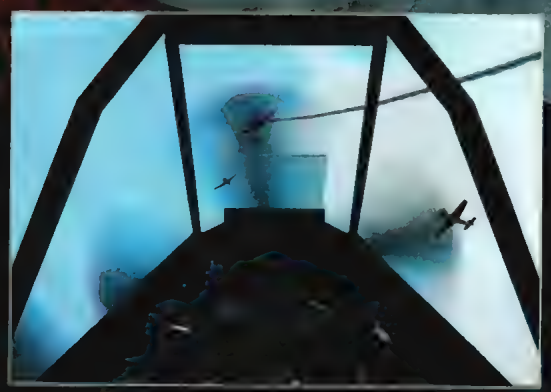

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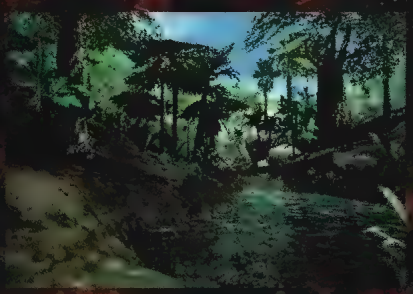

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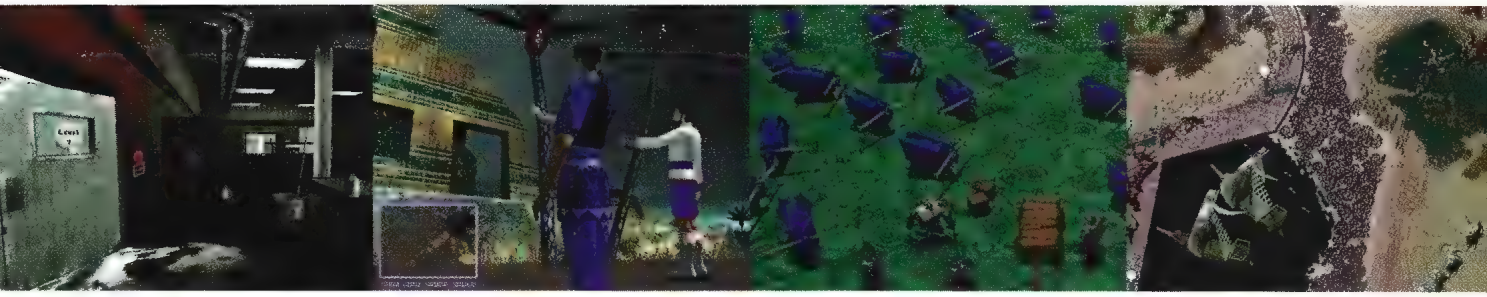

a Gamer's BEST Friend

Cavedog Entertainment made a serious splash with its chart-topping debut Total Annihilation. *Now the company is anxious to prove it's got more up its sleeve than just real-time strategy games* — a lot *more.*

By Colin Williamson

My first impression upon visiting the offices of Cavedog Entertainment is that the company has been aptly named; stepping into their office space is akin to entering a subterranean lair. The fluorescent overhead lights are permanently shut off, leaving the programmers and artists to work in their dimly lit cubicles — most of which are decked out in anime posters and the ever-popular Manga Spawn action figures. The atmosphere may be dark and menacing, but there are some exciting developments going on behind the mysterious facade.

With an employee roster ranging from industry veterans to fresh talent hand-picked off the Internet, it's obvious that Cavedog has its sights on becoming one of the industry's biggest players. After the amazing success of

the company's debut game, *Total Annihilation*, and its subsequent spin-offs, Cavedog certainly has the goodwill (and the resources) to build itself into an outfit rivaling Westwood, Blizzard, or LucasArts — and the next generation of titles in development is being designed to achieve just that. While the much-vaunted *Total Annihilation 2* is still being kept under wraps (the defection of lead designer Chris Taylor to Microsoft has inevitably delayed the project somewhat), Cavedog was only too happy to take the wraps off the original titles that gamers will be enjoying next year, and beyond....

Amen

While the first-person shooter market has suffered from a total lack of gameplay innovation, Cavedog is hoping to change that with a new action-adventure thriller named *Amen*. Sharing more in common with Konami's upcoming PlayStation title *Metal Gear Solid* than id's *Quake*, *Amen* is a game where playing with stealth and caution yields deadly results. "The first thing we said when we demoed this game to the media was this is not a 3D shooter!" says designer Greg McMartin. "The game is far more than that — it's an action-adventure game that tries to meld the hard-core action genre with the adventure RPG genre."

On Christmas eve in the year 2032, one third of the planet's population goes insane without reason. The remaining mentally stable population — referred to as the un-afflicted — work to create a series of safe zones across the planet. Unfortunately, the afflicted have plans of their own, and begin a full-scale invasion of North America. You play a cocky British commando, sent over from the UK to assist the American resistance. "At the beginning of the game, all you know is that you're going across the ocean to fight," says McMartin. "You don't realize the scope of what's going on. What causes affliction? Is this Armageddon? Is it a disease? And as the game progresses, you'll find out why."

In Amen, you'll be presented with a door to breach. You could back down the very first corridor in the level, or just bash open the door with a forklift. The choice is yours, but stealth might be the best option.

The game is spread out over a series of seventeen acts (don't call them levels!), ranging from decaying urban environments to futuristic military bases. The pacing throughout these acts is ordained by the storyline. "In 3D shooters, you usually have a hub-based system or a mission-based system," McMartin says. "There's no defined flow for our acts, because the story dictates what happens."

Even though you can shoot at everyone in *Amen*, you'll most likely alert a troop of guards to come running if you come in with guns blazing. So it's to your advantage to keep quiet and play with stealth. "The focus of the game is totally away from gore," McMartin says. "You can play this game without killing a single thing. Combat is obviously a fun element for many people — and we're working for that. But we had a joke about holding a contest where whoever kills the least number of people wins a prize."

Amen is still in its early stages, but the design team managed to whip up a sample of the interactive cutscene-like sequences that *Amen* will be chock-full of: after making your way through a seemingly abandoned subway tunnel, you find an operating subway car. Stepping inside the control booth, you hit the panel in front of you, and the car begins zipping down the tunnel at breakneck speed. Suddenly, the track goes out, and the car flips on its side, smashing through metal barriers and rolling uncontrollably. Finally, the roof shears off and you're able to leap out. "Each act will be full of cinematic events like that," says McMartin, "where the player says 'Oh, crap! What am I doing?' It's really easy to build events like this in our editor, and we can toss in all kinds of awesome things for the player to get involved in."

Amen isn't a game that's limited solely to indoor environments. "We're not doing fake outdoor terrain here; we have miles and miles of outdoor terrain," says McMartin. One of the most insanely detailed acts is the aircraft carrier episode — you'll get to battle through a ship built to scale, complete with ruined aircraft littering the lower decks. And after you clean out the Afflicted infestation aboard, you'll discover that the second half of the

In this image from Act 12 of Amen, you'll be looking around in the depths of an offshore military base. You'll probably be able to use that vehicle, too — but be careful, because anything can alert the baddies to your presence.

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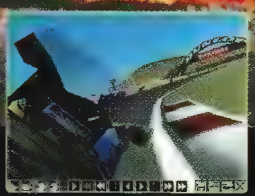
or consequences.



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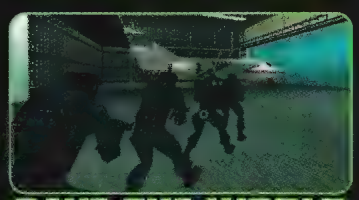

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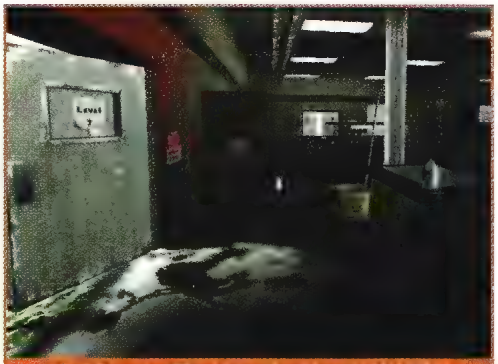


In Act 1 of *Amen*, you'll get to explore deserted halls that seem to be teeming with more danger than a *Half-Life* level.

act will bring back memories of a certain Leonardo DiCaprio flick.

In *Amen*, you'll explore a few locations you might have encountered in real life. The act set at Pittsburgh International Airport is eerily detailed, right down to the textures on the luggage carts. "We're trying to be as authentic as humanly possible," McMartin says. "We've taken rolls and rolls of film for reference, because realism is really important for us. The act designers will be nit-picking like crazy. One of the texture artists was looking at a photo of a corridor in Pittsburgh International, and was counting the number of tiles. And they were debating if they should scale the texture down so they could fit in six tiles, just like in real life. It's particularly anal to some degree, but I think it's going to show in the end."

The interface in *Amen* is being finalized, but the final product will probably include readouts for different parts of your commando's body. If you've been shot in the leg, your movement will be inhibited, and a head wound may result in the screen spinning madly. The inventory system is similar to *Diablo*, in that you can click-and-drag objects onto your persona — and whether or not those objects will be useful in combat is up to its physical makeup. The team's goal is to make the interface as simplified as a standard first-person shooter, yet as deep as the one in *System Shock*.

The system specs for *Amen* are admittedly pretty beefy — with *Amen*'s heavy use of special effects and the sheer number of high-resolution textures, McMartin reports that a Voodoo2 will be required hardware: "We're betting on the fact that when the game's released, that'll be the norm, so we're shooting to optimize it for the 12MB cards," he says.

In any case, the team has plenty of time for the consumer technology curve to play catch-up — the game is tentatively set for a 1999 release date. *Amen* may serve as true comfort for those burned out on the upcoming deluge of *Unreal* and *Quake*-engine games — keep your eyes on this one.

Total Annihilation: Kingdoms

With the sequel strictly under wraps, and a devoted fan-base screaming for more *Total Annihilation*, Cavedog has announced a "prequel" — a sword-and-sorcery *TA* romp subtitled *Kingdoms*.

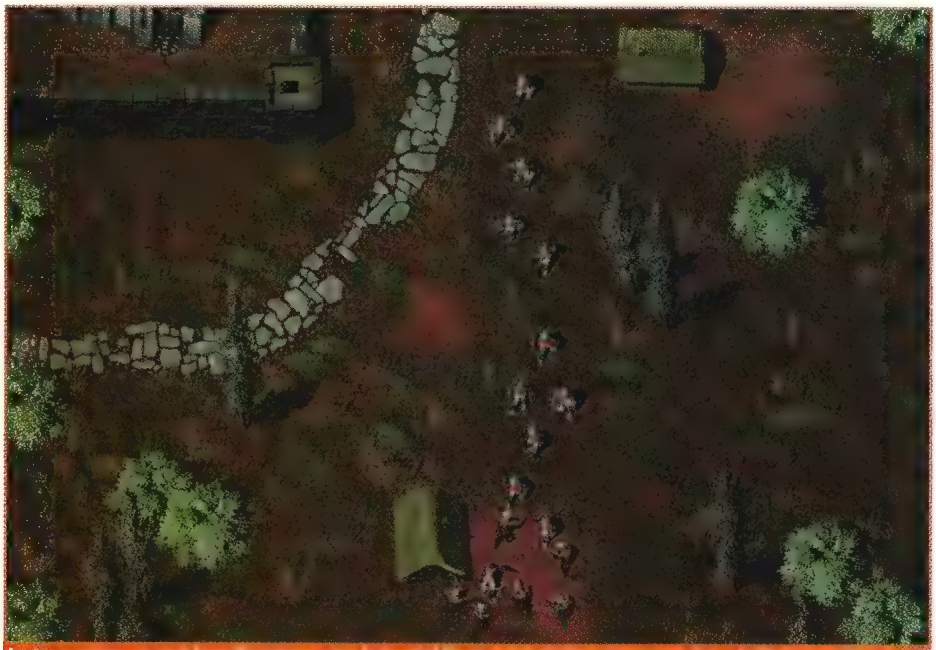
Kingdoms' chief designer is Cavedog co-founder Clayton Kauzlaric, whose past projects include the original *Total Annihilation*, and *Secret of Evermore* from SquareSoft. Kauzlaric reports that *Kingdoms* will be sticking to its roots, but expanding the content. "With *Kingdoms*, we're keeping all the best components that made *Total Annihilation* a great game," he says, "But we're going to be looking very carefully at things like story, characters, and things like that. Going with a fantasy environment seems like a natural progression for us, because it's a warmer and friendlier environment — and the potential audience is also larger for a fantasy theme. "

Kingdoms lets you [illegible] about the landscape and creating [illegible] paths. This early shot shows off the interaction between land and water-based units.

Kingdoms takes place in a kingdom where four immortal siblings — representing earth, air, fire, and water — are vying for superiority. With multiple races available for control, your style of play can greatly vary, but you won't be restricted to your areas of expertise. "You won't be forced to stay in the water if you're the water race," says Kauzlaric. "Working your way up the ladder is different on all four sides." And with some troops, you may not need to set up a base — just band them together, and make a sweep across the landscape.

Though magic users and archers will have their own specialized range attacks, melee combat will come heavily into play. "It's a big issue," says Kauzlaric, "because everything shoots in *TA*. Nothing comes up close and starts bashing, so it's a challenge making it look good." And since the characters are easily animated polygon figures rather than rendered sprites, adding multiple attacks for each unit is a simple proposition. The end result is a realistic display of bludgeoning, rather than the somewhat twitchy-looking battles of *Myth*. The *Kingdoms* team is still working on the aspect of the death sequence — "Characters can't just shatter into a bunch of polygons anymore," says Kauzlaric. "Each race is going to expire in a different fashion, but we can't give away too much about it yet."

Most of the units in the original *Total Annihilation* were low-polygon, low-detail robots, so creating living creatures for *Kingdoms* with the same engine was a big challenge. "The first question was, could we do lifeforms with faces in the engine?" says Kauzlaric. "Fortunately, it turned out that we weren't taking advantage of everything



In this [illegible] let them be, or wipe 'em out — that's why they call it *Total Annihilation*, baby!

Ron Gilbert

Chats with *PC Gamer*

After redefining the modern graphic adventure with *Maniac Mansion* and *The Secret of Monkey Island*, design deity Ron Gilbert split off from LucasArts to form Humongous Entertainment, a design house specializing in children's entertainment titles. After major successes like *Putt-Putt Joins the Parade*, Gilbert founded Cavedog Entertainment, and blew all us gamers away with *Total Annihilation*.

Even though he's hard at work designing the upcoming *Good and Evil*, Ron was kind enough to take a few minutes out of his busy schedule to talk with *PC Gamer* about game design, the latest fads in PC gaming, and where Cavedog is headed.

How did Cavedog get its start?

I was working at Lucasfilm up to 1992. Shelly Day and I started Humongous Entertainment, which started out doing adventure games for kids. We did that for almost six years. When we started Humongous Entertainment, we didn't expect we'd be doing kid's games; we assumed we'd be doing mainstream adventures. But we were pretty successful at it, so we stayed focused on it. It's also an interesting design challenge, doing games for kids, because there's different criteria that you have to deal with. I learned a lot about design.

The Putt-Putt series from Humongous was one of Gilbert's recent successes. He says that programming kids' games taught him a lot.

What do you think made *Total Annihilation* stand out from the countless RTS games that were competing for shelf space?

It was a couple of things. One, it was the 3D. Everybody was doing bitmapped sprites, and the stuff we did gave it an appealing visual look — tanks rumbled over the terrain and over hills. People hadn't seen that attention to detail in the units. Two, was the sheer number of units — we just overloaded people with them. I played a lot of *Red Alert*, which is one of my favorite games, but there just wasn't enough variety in the units! That's why we went overboard with the downloadable units. We figured "You bought the game, you've mastered the units, so let's mix it up — here's a new one!" And that's kept it fresh.

Are you planning on releasing new add-ons via the web for Cavedog's new releases?

If it makes sense. For *Kingdoms*, certainly; *Elysium* is planning for it; with *Amen* you can download new weapons. I think it's a great way to go. But you can play with bizarre things — one thing we wanted to do in *TA* was create wacky units that were just a little bit silly, like the Clown Kbots — it's a little VW Bug, and fifty Kbots jump out of it and run around.

We wouldn't put that in the game, but you can get it from the website. We'll keep that up.

Continued on page 177

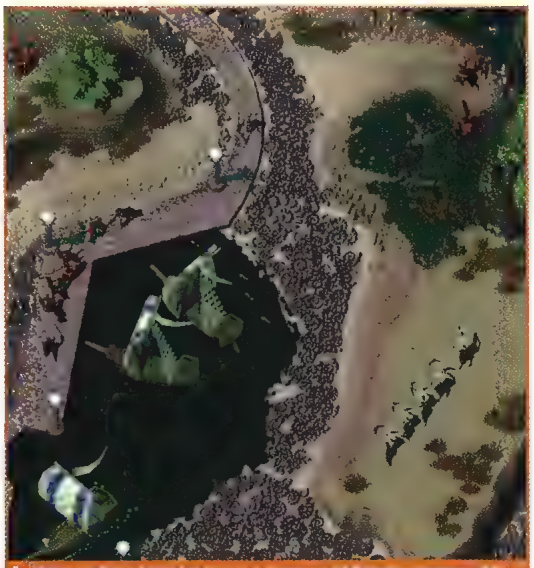
Kingdoms creatures were conceptually sketched out by Cavedog artists before being transformed into polygonal beasts.

that was under the hood in *TA*. We had some great technology and a small amount of time. Now we can take that time, and work smarter."

Cavedog has done a lovely job of tying together the polygonal actors with high-res, hi-color backgrounds. The obvious dithering of the first *TA* is gone, and the game's maps are being created by taking huge chunks of rendered landscapes and patching them together. Among the improvements to the engine is the usage of transparent textures, which makes creating organic creatures an easier task — now it's no problem to create details such as a skeleton's ribcage, or an eagle's feathers. And by using a custom animation tool similar to Power Animator, the Cavedog artists can crank out top-notch animations in record time.

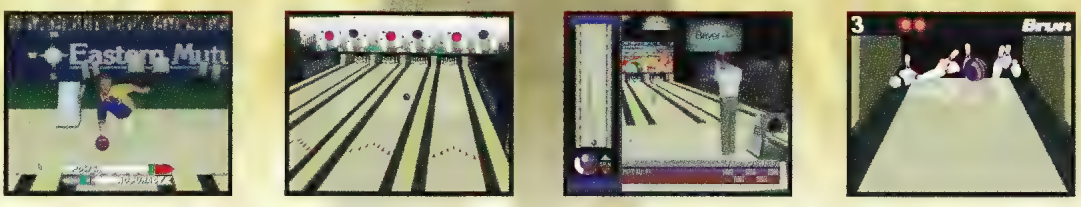
So how does the finished product actually look? Kauzlaric fires up an early build of *Kingdoms*, and calls up the flying dragon unit. The massive winged beast (with rider attached) takes off, glides through the air, banks realistically, and subtly flaps its wings whenever it needs a gain in altitude. The attention to detail is surprising — and that's just one of *Kingdoms*' dozens of units. "In terms of elegance and complexity, we've never done anything like this before," says Kauzlaric, beaming. "I think we're going to outdo everyone with the overall look and personality."

Multiple height maps for each level will be included, and the player's field of view is based upon the surrounding hills — a feature that was originally yanked from the original *TA*. "There were a lot of things we were cautious about, that we didn't put into *TA*," Kauzlaric says. "But now that we've played the game for thousands of hours, we've realized



Archers in *Kingdoms* let loose a barrage of flaming arrows. All four sides have access to the same units, but each has a distinct advantage in their home environment.

You're in the 10th frame,
there's a bucket of sweat
dripping off your brow
and this shot is worth
way too much money



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Continued from page 172

Doesn't that put a little drain on the development teams? You're technically not making any money from it...

The key there is releasing good units, and it did take a severe drain on the development team to keep it up. They're very popular, and everyone wanted them — 11 million hits on the website! — but it got to the point where we had to move on with what we were doing. We're still working on them, though, and we'll have several more by the end of the year.

What's your current involvement with Kingdoms?

My current role at Cavedog is Creative Director, so I have to meddle! I deal with *Kingdoms* a lot more — mostly because it's a sister product of *TA*, and Clayton [Kauzlaric] and I get along well from a creative standpoint. He's helped me out with *Good and Evil*.

How many people were with Cavedog when you first started out?

It started out pretty small. I think we have ninety people now. Cavedog will only expand if there are ideas to expand it. It's all based on whether or not we have good ideas. Four development teams is good for now — there's a couple of designs people are putting together, but it'll be a couple of months before they've got them to the level where they're worth doing or not.

Can small development houses still cut it?

Absolutely — but they need to be teamed up with a publisher that has some muscle in the marketplace, to bring the sales resources into the picture. There are a million great games to be made out there, and a lot of them will come from really small developers.

With *Elysium* and *Amen*, Cavedog is expanding out of the RTS genre. Are there any other genres you'd like to tackle?

There really isn't a strategic goal to take over genres. I knew from the beginning that I didn't want Cavedog to be a single-genre company. We wanted to be able to go broad, which was why I was interested in *Amen*. After *TA* came out, we got all these proposals from people to do RTS games, but we already had our RTS game.

Are there any plans to do a RTS game that's not a *Total Annihilation* title?

Other than *Kingdoms*, probably not.

Can you tell us anything about *TA2*?

No, no, no.

Cavedog has grown into a team of ninety people. Gilbert says that small developers need to pair with large publishers for marketplace share.

Continued on page 178

that hills are important in this type of warfare." As your troops make their way up a hill, your line of sight will expand, faster and faster, until you can see the hordes of enemy troops just waiting to ambush you. This reliance on line of sight is a replacement for radar. In addition, the *Kingdoms* team has been looking into self-spawning units — just send out a few members of a certain race, and they'll start multiplying like bunnies.

Each side in *Kingdoms* is protected by a deity, who may get the inclination to hop onto the battlefield when the tides aren't in his people's favor. Kauzlaric explains: "If you fulfill several conditions, there's a chance that the deity will appear for a time, at which point there's a chance that the other deities will notice the ruckus," he says. "It could essentially change the face of an entire battle. Of course, there are people who don't like that aspect of randomness — so we'll include an option to switch it off."

The last new addition is a handful of non-player characters. Some of them will be useful, while others will be worthless peons ripe for the slaughter, adding to the expected totally annihilative gameplay. And yes, everything in the game can be destroyed (well, duh).

Surprisingly, *Kingdoms* will include full support for 3D accelerators. While the original Voodoo chipset had some problems with overall image quality, a Voodoo2 should be able to produce eye-pleasing backgrounds, along with jaw-dropping lighting and other nifty special effects. This doesn't mean the software rendering will be overlooked — if you could run the original *TA* on your system without a hiccup, Kingdoms won't give you any grief.

Kingdoms is scheduled for release in March 1999. After its release, Cavedog plans to release a series of add-on units via the web (a la the first *TA*), beefing up the replay value — and keeping you busy until the release of *Total Annihilation 2*. That sounds like a good plan to us; *Kingdoms* is one we're looking forward to.

The design for *Elysium*'s many characters ranges from the surreal to the horrific.

Elysium

Scheduled for release just before the turn of the millennium, one of Cavedog's more mysterious developments is a hybrid RPG/adventure entitled *Elysium*. Spearheading the development effort is none other than long-time industry veteran John Cutter, head writer on Sierra's classic *Betrayal at Krondor*, and producer of classic Cinemaware titles like *Defender of the Crown* and *Rocket Ranger*.

The inspiration for *Elysium* resulted from the dynamic plotline of the popular "X-Files" TV series. Cutter explains: "About a year ago we were comparing notes and designs, and we started to talk about "The X-Files", and what was going on in the series," he says. "It occurred to me that you can't do that in a computer game — you can't

A [illegible] sums it up about Elysium. What do they mean? We don't know either.

Continued from page 177

There will be Kbots in it.

What have you been playing lately?
Not a whole lot, since I've been pretty absorbed in things. I had a good game of *Solitaire* last night! I go through waves with games — I'll take nine months and not play anything, since I'm so focused into my design stuff. Then I'll go into game obsession mode, and play for a while. It's not really a constant thing with me.

Do you think that the success of 3D acceleration has led to developers moving toward style over substance, or do you think it really has a lot to offer?
I think the answer is yes to both of those questions — it has led to that, since now we have all this hardware. The playing field has been leveled in the sense of technology, because we all go through the same APIs and can put the same number of polygons on the screen. It all comes down to who's got the best artists. I think that will continue for a little while. But then people will get over that, and start asking "What can I really do in 3D?" When CD-ROMs were produced, everybody had FMV, everybody's got fancy pictures, but slowly people realized they can do real content, and not just flashy stuff. I think we'll go through the same thing with 3D accelerators.

What would you rather develop, a 2D game or a 3D game?
I think that 3D has some dangers. You have to be careful in 3D, or you can get into a lot of traps, like "Okay, I've got a 3D camera, I can spin it anywhere I want," but there's a point where you need to focus the player's attention on something. RTS games are a good example. *Total Annihilation* with a free-floating camera that you could move anywhere you wanted, and look up a Kbot's butt, wouldn't make it a good game. The player needs certain information, and there are subtle tricks you can do to make it all the more interesting. One of the dangers is giving the player too much control over what they're seeing, and that's where 2D stuff is kinda nice. Sometimes, simpler is better.

***Total Annihilation* is one of the games in the second-season playoffs of the Professional Gamer's League. Do you think that pro gaming will take off?**
I think it's in its infancy, and there are a few quirks to be worked out. It's difficult to do that stuff over the Internet because it's so easy to cheat. I think that people in the league will be able to resolve it, somehow. I think pro gaming will be around a long time.

Pro gamers in the Professional Gamer's League will try their luck at *TA* in the second season.

Continued on page 181

This [illegible] Most of the actual game will be played from a perspective similar to *Diablo*.

A [illegible] in *Elysium*'s world beyond dreams.

just hang around a water cooler and talk about the game, because everybody's in a different place as far as the storyline is concerned. I started thinking, would it be possible to use an episodic approach for the storytelling aspect in *Elysium*? We're hoping this can be one of the first episodic roleplaying adventure games."

In *Elysium*, you control the actions of a team of researchers, led by Galen Shepherd, the head of a dream research laboratory. Shepherd has discovered a world beyond the realm of dreams that he wishes to explore, and has gathered a top-notch team of philosophers and scientists to aid in his investigation. The only problem is that the majority of the scientific community doesn't take his work seriously — after all, there's no concrete evidence of Elysium even existing. Nevertheless, the research team has discovered ways to enter the mysterious world by finding the "door" in their dreams that modifies their brainwaves to the point where Elysium is accessible.

While *Betrayal at Krondor* was broken up into different chapters, *Elysium* takes place over a series of roughly five 10 to 20 hour games, which are all connected via a main storyline. Different episodes will put emphasis on drama, humor, puzzle-solving, and adventure elements.

Cutter has been given the chance to break free with *Elysium*, since his past effort had him confined to Raymond Feist's Krondor universe. "*Elysium* is a fantasy universe, but not Tolkienesque — it's a brand new place," he says. "It's undiscovered country. We want a game that has the beauty and emersiveness of a *Myst*, with the quick, real-time gameplay of *Diablo*, and in-depth storytelling.

"Our screenwriter just turned in a script that's a little atypical, that's called Howell," Cutter says. "Dr. Shepherd is watching his dog one evening, and the dog is sleeping, kicking its legs and growling. And he starts wondering if there's a part of Elysium that animals go to. So he hooks the dog up in the dream lab, and goes into Elysium with him. He winds up in a place called Lycanthum, which is the birthplace of all the werewolf legends." Different screenwriters will be working on specialized episodes; an ex-Jim Henson Studios employee is set to pen one of the more humorous sections of the game, which features a race of Muppet-like robots.

The graphic design of the different races in *Elysium* has been painstakingly developed. The art team has coated bulletin boards with conceptual art, and preliminary designs for clothing, architecture, and physical makeup. "This game is really about art," says graphic designer Gary Hanna. "The fact that this is a world beyond dreams gives us a lot of

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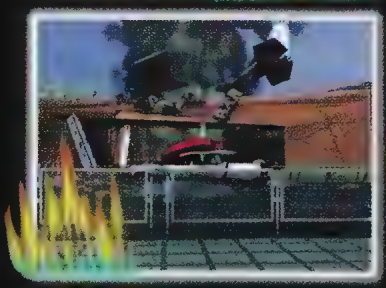

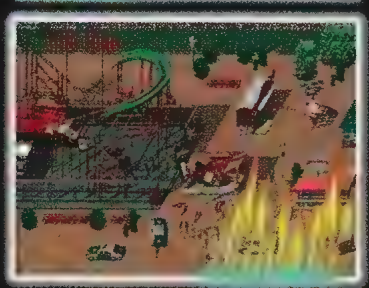

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Continued from page 178

Has the departure of Chris Taylor affected the morale at the company, and the progress of *Total Annihilation 2*?
Certainly not *Kingdoms*, since that was Clayton [Kauzlaric]'s brainchild. If Chris [Taylor] had stayed, *TA2* might have come out a little bit sooner.

A lot of employers have been hiring directly off the Internet. Does Cavedog routinely check the 'net for talent?
We haven't actively gone out in search of those people, but we have hired people who have come through that. Talent is an interesting thing to look for, since it can come from anywhere.

What would you recommend to a young person who's looking into a career in game design?
Learn the tools, especially with the art. Doing some shareware stuff is a good way to gain experience, and get feedback on your work — things like *Quake* levels, and third-party units for *Total Annihilation*. One of the best way to break into the gaming business is to come into a company via their product testing department. If you're an avid gamer with good skills, tracking down bugs and documenting stuff, it's pretty easy to get a job. Many of our people working on *TA2* came from our testing department.

Are you planning expansion packs for your new titles?
Probably. The web is changing the whole expansion pack idea. Before the web, if you wanted to incrementally upgrade your game, there was no way except for expansion packs. Now you can deliver smaller pieces to a large number of people. But if you look at the number of the people who are active on the web, it's only thirty percent of your buyers. There's still a bunch of people who don't surf the web, or even have an Internet connection. You need to reach them some way, and expansion packs is a good way to do that.

What percentage of *Total Annihilation* buyers are the hardcore crowd — the people who check the site daily for new units or news?
I don't know the answer to that — we ask that question a lot. When you sit down to do a game today, there's a big dilemma, of how much time you spend on multi-player as opposed to single player. One of the problems is that the people on the Internet are so vocal. It's very easy to think that 90 percent of the people who play your game are on the Internet, playing it multi-player, when it could be as low as 25 percent. When you're designing, you have to make sure you're not only satisfying a very small vocal audience.

A year ago, everything had to be multi-player, if it wasn't multi-player, it stunk, two stars out of ten. But I've talked to several people in the press, and several other designers who are like, "This multi-player stuff has just taken over game design. Someone's got to come out with a great single-player game that everybody loves, and it's a good game because it's a good game."

Continued on page 182

Elysium features characters from all walks of life, from spiritual monks to dwarves. Cavedog has spent a year just on concepts for the game.

creative license. We spent close to a year working on the basic concept, before we even started working on the design. Our scriptwriter is in California, and he'll come up here and give us history lessons of the world, and talk about it like he learned it in college! It's amazing."

But how will death be handled in a partly subconscious world? As in LucasArts' adventure games, the game will backtrack to the last important decision if a fatal mistake is made. "We want to build something with fun and compelling gameplay at its base," says Cutter. "We want to challenge gamers, not frustrate them. We don't want to give people a reason to say 'I'm tired, I'm going to stop for the night.' We want constant surprises to keep them excited. I want people to play this game all night long, and not be able to stop."

Cutter was able to show us a preliminary version of the game engine, which displayed awe-inspiring architecture and seamless camera movement. As the main character walked across a rainy plateau toward a large structure in the distance, Cutter explained how the player will be clued in to the surroundings. "We were concerned when we started working from a *Diablo*-style perspective. What happens when you walk up to an enormous monolithic quantum gate from a 3/4 perspective? We've worked it so when you walk up to something important and click on it, the camera would pull back and zoom to show how big this really is." And with a few keystrokes, the camera glides backwards to reveal the structure.

Another technical hurdle the team had to get past was the sheer number of NPCs that were required for a storyline this large. "There's no way we'd be able to pull this off in a 2D game," says Cutter. "So we've come up with a basic set of skeletal animations for people talking and moving. If we need to create new characters, we can make them fairly quickly based on multiple body types, and the animations are already complete. And that's different geometry. We're not going to cut corners, and change the color of someone's shirt to red."

After the game's initial release, the team will be releasing a series of add-on episodes. "The goal is to keep people guessing," says Cutter. "Get them hooked on the characters and storyline, the sub-plots. And we've got forty-one episodes in paragraph form. If things work out, we're going to be doing this for a while."

Good and Evil

Ron Gilbert's *Good and Evil* is one of the biggest mysteries in the industry — only a handful of people have seen it in action, and the plot and gameplay are shrouded in secrecy. However, Gilbert was courteous enough to give us a demo of the basic *Good and Evil* engine, and explain a little about the game's design.

Gilbert describes *Good and Evil* as an RTS/RPG adventure game, where "there's some good, there's some evil, and some stuff happens." To us, it looks

Gilbert has kept *Good and Evil* under heavy wraps until now — *PC Gamer* got an exclusive sneak peek at the demo.

Continued from page 181

Do you think massively multi-player online gaming will take off in the future?

Creatively, it's a very exciting proposition. Technologically, we have some severe bandwidth problems that have to be overcome. There's also some financial models that need to be worked out. It's really fun to have a lot of people play online, but there really isn't a way to make money. When you dump a couple million dollars into a quality multi-player only game, it's difficult to get that back. It'll change over time.

Who are your biggest influences?

The first game that really captured my imagination was a Commodore 64 game called *Jumpman*. I really admire Sid Meier; he's got an attention to design detail that I think is amazing. I never could have made *Civilization*, just because of the mind-boggling way everything links together. *Civ* was a game I played a lot.

Sid Meier's *Civilization* and *Civilization II* have inspired many game developers through the years, including Gilbert.

Can game design be taught?

Game design is like writing, or music, or film-making. There's a lot to learn. The people who have the inherent talent for it will get the most out of the teaching. You're not going to take somebody and turn them into a great writer because you put them through writing classes, but somebody who's very creative would become a good one.

Right now, the only way to learn game design is to get hooked up with a company, in the test department, art, or programming, to learn the environment. I think it's encouraging that you can learn some of that stuff — I've talked to some university students studying computer science, who have a little class on game design. It's too bad that they're not being taught by people who don't understand game design, so they're buying a textbook on design from Barnes and Noble bookstore.

I used to go to college, but I dropped out and went to work for a company called Human Engineering Software. I was working on a little piece of software that I sold while I was in college, and they offered me a job. I thought "I can stay here in college, or move to California and make a lot of money!" I worked there for about six months, they went bankrupt, then I thought about going back to college. I got a call from a friend of mine who was friends with the guy running Lucasfilm games, and they were looking for a Commodore 64 programmer to port over *Ballblazer* and *Rescue on Fractalus*. I was there for eight years.

As the 21st century approaches, where do you see Cavedog going?

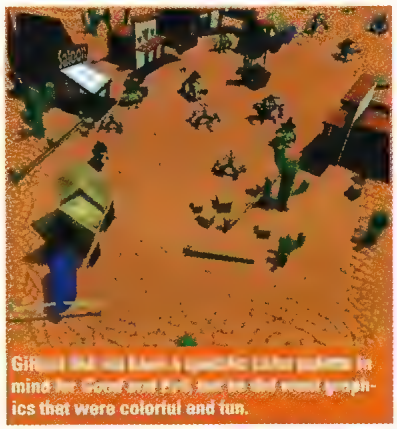
I don't really have a master plan — our plan is simply to make really good games, and forge new territory. It's about innovation and trying new things. I'm not really into creating a quirky art-film type game, but I do want things that are pushing boundaries in a way....

The [illegible] on for [illegible]. We [illegible] a healthy dose of Gilbert's unique sense of humor.

[illegible] it's all jutting angles.

like a series of adventure-game vignettes with liberal amounts of dialogue, combat, and more importantly, Gilbert's own brand of humor.

Graphically, *Good and Evil* shares the jutting angles and geometrically rough (yet stylish) architecture of Chuck Jones' Warner Bros. cartoons. The game's perspective is currently locked in at a 3/4 view, but can be zoomed in and out accordingly. "I wanted to find something that worked well in 3D," says Gilbert. "We've got all these polygon constraints. I sat down with the guys doing conceptual art, and wanted them



Gilbert [illegible] mind [illegible] ics that were colorful and fun.

to design a world all about angles." Many of the textures have small swirls on them, which create almost a hand-textured look and feel for the game. "I just wanted graphics that are colorful and fun — graphics that work with the game," says Gilbert.

Since our first preview of *Good and Evil* in the September issue, we've found out a few new factoids — the dialog system is identical to the multiple-choice interface of *Monkey Island*, and the majority of the responses exist solely for humor's sake. Also, the engine has been tweaked so water levels can raise and lower dynamically, adding a few new gameplay elements (Gilbert is presently designing a level where a dam breaks, and the player is in a race against time). And yes, there will be pirates. Lots of pirates. Gilbert likes pirates.

In any case, *Good and Evil* is at least sixteen months away from release, which will give Gilbert's team more than ample opportunity to polish the game to perfection. We are willing to wait — the game's unique design and play should be worth it.

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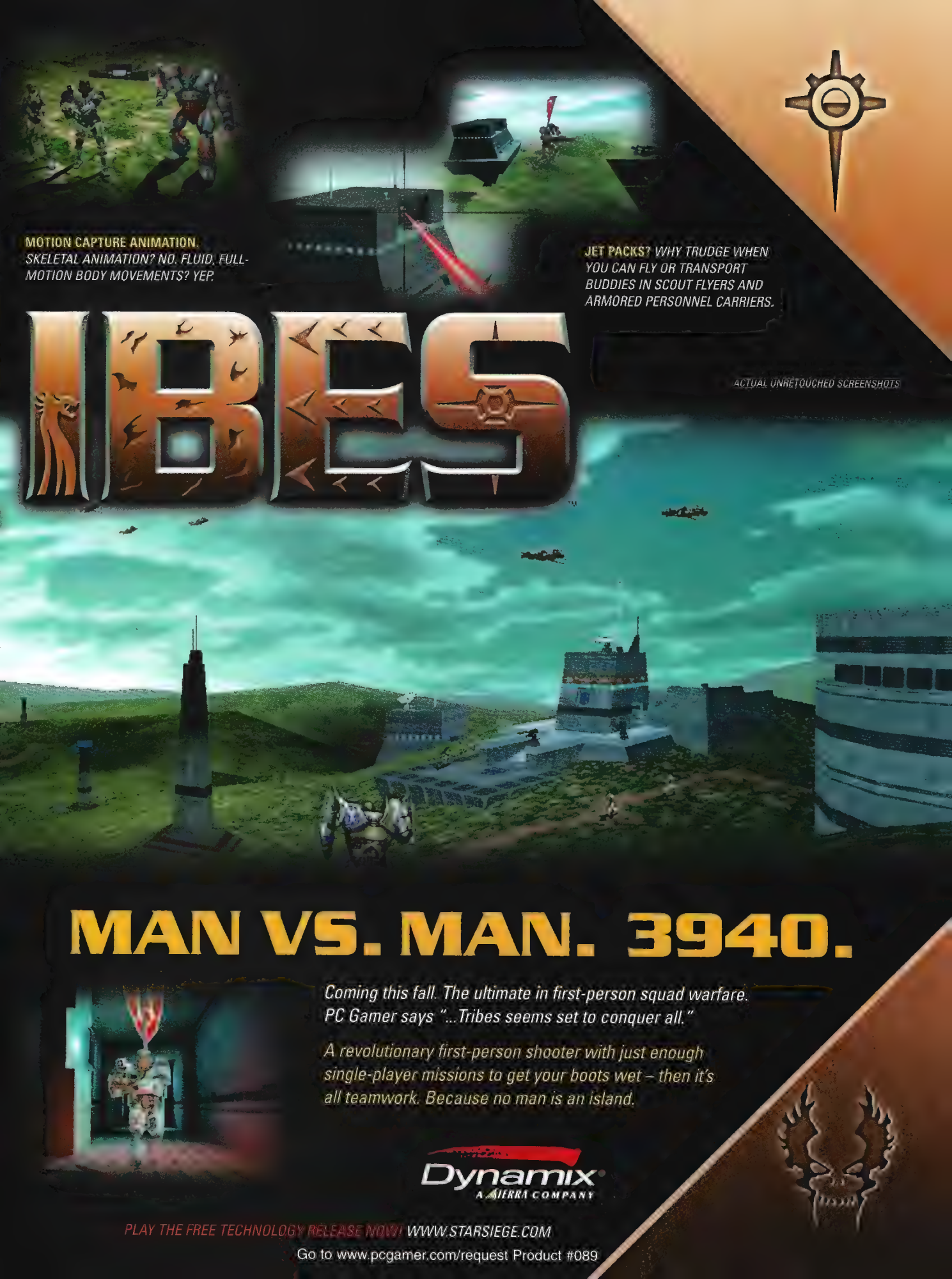
MOTION CAPTURE ANIMATION.
SKELETAL ANIMATION? NO. FLUID, FULL-MOTION BODY MOVEMENTS? YEP.
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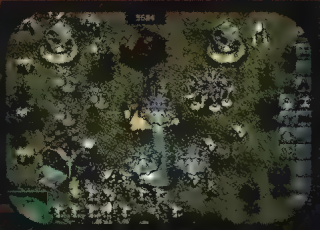

True Fog of War lets you set up ambushes and hide from the enemy. Famous facial motion capture brings mission briefings to life.

pig-fart powered mutants
homicidal agricultural robots
and techno-geek warmongers
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KKND2 KROSSFIRE

WHAT IS K.I.? K.I. IS KILLER INTELLIGENCE. K.I. IS TO A.I. WHAT GIANT MUTANT SCORPION BATTALIONS ARE TO DEER. K.I. IS A COMPUTER OPPONENT THAT ACTS EXACTLY LIKE THE POST APOCALYPSE MUTANT WARMONGER IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE. IT UNDERSTANDS TOPOLOGY - WHERE TO PLACE GUARD TOWERS, HOW MANY UNITS TO HOLD BACK FOR DEFENSE. IT WILL ENTER YOUR BASE THROUGH THE LEAST DEFENDED SECTION. AND DO AS MUCH DAMAGE AS POSSIBLE. IT SENDS SCOUTS TO SEE WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING. IT RETREATS. IT WANTS TO CRUSH YOUR ARMIES, KILL YOU 'N' DESTROY YOUR DIGNITY. MUTANTS DO IT WITH K.I. ... WHO ARE YOU TO ARGUE?

RATING PENDING RP ESRB

PC CD ROM

Melbourne House

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Die, Terrorist Scum!

If there is one dream job for the majority of the *PC Gamer* editors (as if playing games for a living isn't a dream job), it's being a member of an elite counter-terrorist group. Getting trained up so you're rock hard, being proficient with all manner of weapons, and then using that proficiency with extreme prejudice against all manner of hostage-taking low-lifes — yeah, that'd be the life for us. Imagine the rush of approaching an embassy full of hostages and terrorists filled with the knowledge that you are so good, so tough, that you'll be able to drop the terrorists without even altering them to your presence. Ah, the hours we have spent dreaming up scenarios, planning our method of attack, acting out how would we sneak up behind those scum and slit their throats.

Unfortunately, in the real world, becoming a member of the SAS or Rangers would involve years of work filled with intense training. And frankly, we can't be bothered. And why should we, when we have *Rainbow Six*?

That's right, thanks to Tom Clancy and the fine folks at Red Storm Entertainment, we can sweep rooms and drop terrorists with one precise head-shot, all without so much as getting out of our chairs. Already patterns of play are emerging, as each member of the PCG team reveals their strengths and weaknesses (usually weaknesses) on the field of battle. Not checking corners, leaving the safety on, standing too close to the concussion grenades, etc. But we're getting better, and maybe, someday, we'll be good enough to take on real terrorists.

Pray that day never comes....

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC

Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD

These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre — although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD

A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE

Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

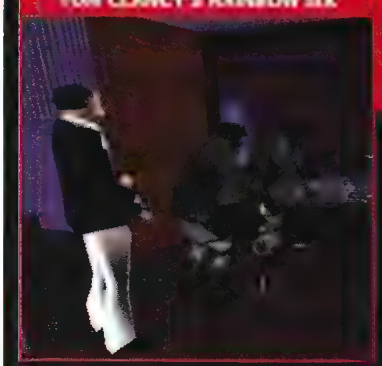
PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.

MOTORHEAD p.203

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX p.198



TOCA CHAMPIONSHIP RACING p.241

Urban Assault

Category:	Action/Strategy
Developer:	TerraTools
Publisher:	Microsoft, (800) 429-9400 *www.microsoft.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; Windows compatible sound card; Mouse	Pentium II; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based accelerator; Joystick, throttle, rudders

Multi-player: Serial/Null-modem; Modem: 28.8; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 4; Free Internet Service: *www.zone.com*

Microsoft's answer to *Battlezone* is a worthy entry in the action/strategy niche, with a nice blend of both elements.

Conventional wisdom says that combining fast-paced action with the resource management, unit building, and command elements of the real-time strategy genre shouldn't work — theoretically, the player's workload should be too high, too complex, and too daunting. But the clever design of *Uprising* and *Battlezone* proved that theory wrong, and resulted in some of the best gaming of the last year. Now Microsoft has joined the fray with *Urban Assault*, which almost succeeds as well as *Battlezone* at walking this fine line, but mediocre artificial intelligence occasionally overtips the workload scale and makes things a touch unmanageable.

Urban Assault is certainly slick and fully realized. From the pounding, highly cinematic introduction to the complexity of the game world, it manages to effectively and completely cradle you in its grip. Set in the future on good old Terra Firma (Earth), the battlefield is known as "The Big Mistake" to the combatants: a post-nuclear apocalypse in which people are crowded into domed cities. Considering what a wasteland the planet is, it's a surprise so many people want to fight for it. The alien Mykonians and Sulgogars are fighting the humans and each other for control of the planet. And even the humans, divided into the Ghorkovs and the Taerkastens, are pissed off at you for ruining the world.

Protecting the host station, while destroying the enemy, is the crux of the game.

All this strife places five combatant forces into some very tight quarters to slug it out, sometimes one on one, sometimes all at once. However, since there aren't too many humans left, warfare has been handed over to drone tanks, choppers, and planes. As a surgically modified cyborg general, you have mental control and command over all these units, along with the ability to personally control any one in combat. A Host Station functions as the base of operations, management stations, and construction unit all rolled into one. This is the mission-critical unit: a large, floating base that must be protected at all costs or the game ends.

The base collects energy from energy plants and spends it to stay alive, build new units, and warp from place to place. Only a few of these energy plants are on each map, and they usually must be fought for. Without a base, you'll have no energy and no ability to make new units or repair damage. A mission ends when your forces gain control of a beam gate and beam to the next mission.

Beyond the confines of the individual campaign missions *Urban Assault*'s larger strategy unfolds much like the multi-path missions of *Command & Conquer*, which involves selecting which territory to invade next, although it's given more importance here than in *C&C*. Some territories cannot be conquered without technology gained from *other* territories. Thankfully, the briefing mentions this.

Once a mission has been accepted, you'll enter the combat zone where maps are divided into squares each with friendly, enemy, or neutral ownership. Some squares are mission critical, and contain tech upgrades or enemy bases. The more squares you own around a power station, the more power you draw. Since you can warp from power station to power station on the map, your base can move deep into enemy territory to launch strikes. Unfortunately, the enemies don't always seem smart enough to use this tactic, and they rarely move bases even when they are under attack.

The primary hub of gameplay is your station, but unit controls can be accessed from overlays in either station mode or while driving one of the many vehicles. These overlays are simple and efficient, and include an innovation that *Battlezone* could have used. The squad menu allows you to easily group units with Windows-esque drag and drop commands that allow you to then give them group orders. Reserve units can be added to these groups and will instantly pick up their orders and join the fight. A five level artificial intelligence tree allows you to set aggressiveness from retreat to full assault, with such orders as "go straight to objective" and "conquer all territories along the way" in between. The degree to which units obey these settings is inconsistent, and too many times units they'll go off chasing enemies when they're just supposed to go to a fixed point.

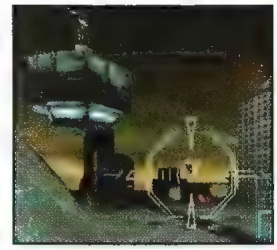
Construction-wise, units are built

The hardware-accelerated graphics are indeed impressive, with some effective explosions and rendering effects found throughout the game.

almost instantly, and include a variety of land and aircraft with armor and weapon upgrades. Of course, you can hop into any vehicle at any point, and luckily, the action mode is largely satisfactory, though one can't help feeling dropped into *Hellbender* at times. That's because controls are a little sluggish, the sense of motion isn't quite believable, and inertia doesn't feel right either. The physics model seems just a bit *off*, but it is easily adapted to. The damage model is more curious, since choppers can fly into the ground or into buildings and suffer only minimal damage, yet be blown from the sky with just a few shots. Again, it has that *Hellbender* feeling.

The larger problem with taking command of a unit is the massive boost in armor and effectiveness it receives. Simply put, you cannot play this game without taking control at key points. Units may well beat back an attack or penetrate an area, but not very effectively and with much heavier losses. Six helicopters facing twelve will be decimated, but if you're in one of them, you'll defy those odds easily. This speaks to two problems. One, the artificial intelligence is only average: Units simply aren't smart enough on their own and must be under human control. Two, human controlled units are simply *too* powerful, wiping out enemies right and left with impunity.

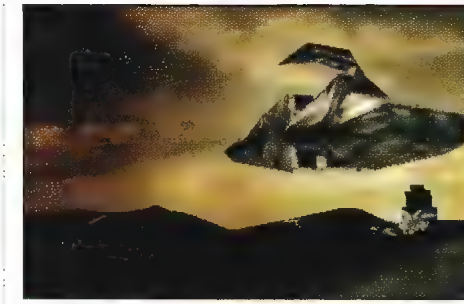
There also seems to have been little effort made to stop the base rush tactic. In fact, it's even worse here than in many games. If you build a big force fast and hit the enemy base, all enemy units vanish and all territory is immediately turned over to you. In one tricky game I tried (stupidly) using tactics that involved gradually penetrating enemy territory and building my forces. I lost repeatedly. When I simply rushed the base, however, I won in less than five minutes. The AI is not smart enough to counter this tactic simply by warping its base to another power station.



The urban landscape is full of wonderfully destructible buildings, but it can also be a bit drab and gray.

The Stoudon bomb is one of the mega-weapons in the game, wiping out everything on the map if triggered.

Visually, the world of *Urban Assault* is full and interesting. Unlike *Battlezone*, there are plenty of buildings and structures. It *is* called *Urban Assault* after all and most missions take place in or surrounding large cities with towering buildings, all of which can be destroyed. The palette, however, is unremittingly gray and dingy, unlike the colorful alien landscapes of *Battlezone*. Unit modeling is strong, and the different races generally feel like true alien races. They also have enough variation in strength, weakness, and unit design to require shifting strategies and keep missions diverse. When more than one combatant is on a map, there's also a chance to lure them into fights where they destroy each other: a nice touch.



Ghorkovs don't like you. They're not sure why, they just think they'd be better rulers of the ruined planet.

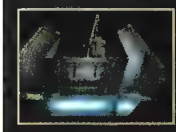
Urban Assault doesn't have all the subtleties of *Battlezone*. Missions tend to require brute force and overwhelming numbers, and unfortunately don't stray too far from this tried-and-true formula. The adventurous and inventive missions of *Battlezone* (such as the one where you leave your vehicle to pick off drivers with a sniper rifle and commandeer their vehicle) simply aren't here. It makes up for this with a faster pace, placing the gameplay closer to action than strategy but this doesn't always work, and some missions are simply too much. Protecting your base and leading a strike into enemy territory can be quite frustrating, as you jump back and forth and between the two. Stronger AI would have alleviated this.

Aside from these issues, *Urban Assault* is still an engrossing and vastly entertaining game. It does become a handful at times, but that seems to have been the intent — the manual explicitly states that personal control of units is required for victory. If you've pounded your way through all of *Battlezone*, then *Urban Assault* is definitely worth a try.

—T. Liam McDonald

THE SECOND BIG MISTAKE

After everything on Earth went to hell in a handbag, several human factions were left to face a new alien threat. All five of these groups are fighting for control of this wasteland.



The Resistance
The Player is the resistance, commanding all the forces through a cyborg link to the host station. The Resistance represents the final fight for freedom and democracy.

The Ghorkovs
A fanatical, quasi-fascist group of humans that emerged from the ashes of Europe and Asia with a bitter hatred of the Resistance forces. Their technology is largely the same as yours.

The Taerkastens
Another human group who hates you, this time because of their love for the environment and hatred of technology. They eschew fancy technology for solid and potent armored vehicles and aircraft. They have the heaviest firepower among the humans.

The Mykonians
A Borg-like race of super-intelligence organic machines. Their parasite machine is sucking energy right out of the earth. They have the strongest weapons of any force, but they are poorly armored.

The Sulgogars
The Sulgs are the prerequisite organic lifeform in the mix: a plant-like race that mixes high tech with organic via genetic manipulation. They are hard to destroy but have only weak firepower.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Well-crafted and interesting world, opponents, and missions. Easy interface.

80%

LOWS: Some faulty "base rush" tactics. High penalty for not controlling units. Average AI.

BOTTOM LINE: A good balance between action and strategy elements.

Vangers

Category: Action/Strategy

Developer: K-D Labs

Publisher: Interactive Magic, (919) 461-0722
www.imagicgames.com

Required	We Recommend
Win95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; P166; 16MB RAM; 195MB hard-drive space; DirectX-compatible PCI video card; DirectX-compatible sound card; Mouse	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium II; 32MB RAM; Game pad

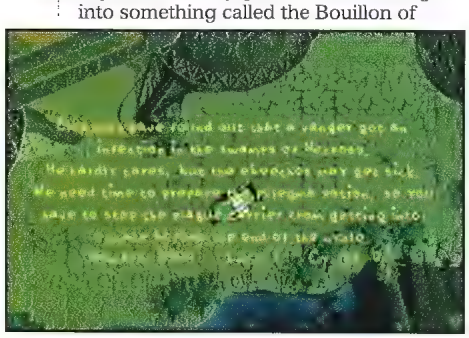
Multi-player: IPX: Yes; TCP/IP: Yes

There's nothing wrong with a solid combat-driving game — unless it happens to have a bizarre backstory and baffling control.

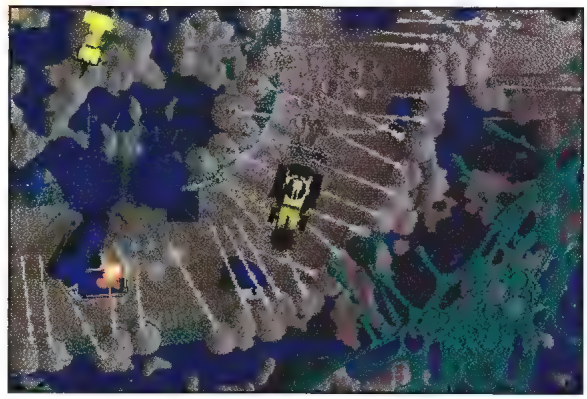
At its core, *Vangers* is a combat-driving game with the usual resource-management components: carry out tasks to earn funds to purchase better vehicles, weapons, and other equipment. But Russian-based developer K-D Labs chose to set the game in a bizarre alien universe. It is actually a cool idea — *provided* you're willing to invest the first few hours after your purchase figuring out what in hell it's supposed to be about.

The premise starts out with mankind discovering how to create passages that made interstellar travel as easy as a trip to the local convenience store. And like human explorers are wont to do, they quickly annihilated any life forms they couldn't comprehend or forge alliances with.

At least, that's what happened until the humans met the Cryspo, an insect-like species that had the wherewithal to put us in our place. So the Softies (us) used a technique called "genetic intrusion" in a last desperate gamble to defeat the Cryspo, closing the passage leading back to the Cryspo's home world. Stuck together, the Cryspo and Softies merged into something called the Bouillon of Spawn, and the result was a new race called Losties that combined elements of both Cryspos and Softies.



"Tabutasks" are little errands a Vanger can run to earn beebs (which are also critters running on the surface of the planet) to upgrade his mechos.

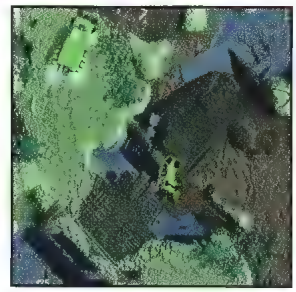


Each of the game's 10 worlds has its own unique appearance and challenges, but most players will probably reach their frustration limit before even making it off the first world of Forstral.

You play as a newly hatched Vanger, the only Losties who are able to travel on the surface of a planet by driving mechos (armed vehicles) between escaves (underground cities) to deliver goods and perform various tasks to earn funds for upgrading their mechos. Your immediate goal is to win two races called Eleerections in order to use one of the passages to reach a new world called Glorx; your ultimate aim is to travel through the "Chain of Worlds" and discover.... well, I guess the secret behind all this stuff.

It's a lot of confusion to saddle on a simple top-down driving shooter, yet the surprising thing is that after deciphering this word-salad back story in the manual, I turned to the "How to Play" section — only to find that things are almost as confusing there.

Everything has an eccentric name — "eleepods," "kuzowocks," "raffa," and "gulp-down," — and even the titles of weapons and equipment are so unintelligible that'll you constantly check the manual and online help to decipher just what it is you're about to purchase. Yes, you'll sort it all out if you're *very* patient, but the psychotic nomenclature will most likely alienate players before they even get a chance to experience the meat of the game.



You'll spend as much time on the surface trying to bounce your way over hilly terrain as you will driving or fighting.

The bulk of play is spent driving mechos across the undulating terrain, performing missions, fighting enemies, and racing for your life. You can even burrow underground, hover above ground, and travel underwater — clever touches that add nice depth to the whole affair. However, a large portion of the landscape is hilly terrain; and once you get stuck in these badlands, you'll spend more time trying to get back on track as you do actually driving to a destination. *Vangers* offers multiplayer action over a LAN or the Internet, but nowhere in the manual or READ.ME file does it explain how many can play — and in my attempts to join or host an Internet game I never found an opponent. Another sore spot is the joystick support — there's no menu to assign button functions; there aren't even default button assignments listed in the manual.

There's no getting around it; this is a damn weird game. If you're able to put your rational thinking processes on the back burner and simply wing it, *Vangers* might eventually turn into a satisfying (if not stellar) gaming experience. But that's a mighty big if — so big, in fact, that it could very well doom *Vangers* to a premature trip to the bargain bin.

—Stephen Poole

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

64%

PROS: Superior terrain graphics; complex game world.

CONS: Driving over terrain is more frustrating than fun, and the too-funny-for-its-own-good manual and interface is confusing.

BOTTOM LINE: There's a decent game buried here somewhere, but only a few will want to find it.

Look Into the Future of Role-Playing

From acclaimed game designer D.W. Bradley, creator of Wizardry V, VI and VII, comes an adventure as infinite as your imagination. *Swords and Sorcery - Come Devils, Come Darkness* is about to change gaming forever.

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Swords & Sorcery

COME DEVILS COME DARKNESS

RATING PENDING RP

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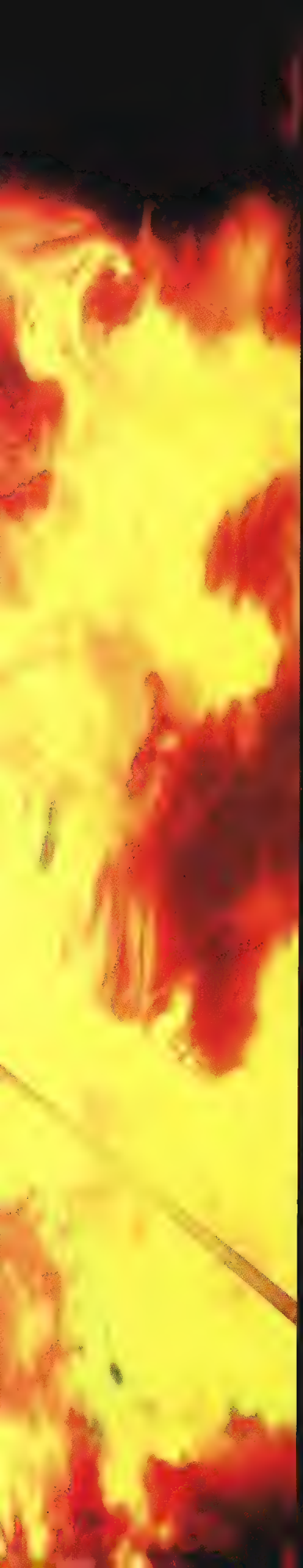


"90%-beautiful graphics, huge compelling story, unique gameplay"

PC Gamer

PC GAMER EDITORS CHOICE

"a unique and fascinating experience you can't get from any other PC game"

Computer Games Strategy Plus

"amazing, bizarre, huge"

GameCenter

"no game collection would be complete without FFVII"

GameBuyer

GOTTA HAVE IT!

FINAL FANTASY VII

Now for the PC.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six

Category: Action/Strategy

Developer: Red Storm Entertainment

Publisher: Red Storm Ent., (919) 460-1776
www.redstorm.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166 w/MMX	P233 w/MMX; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based accelerator; 400MB HD space for full install; Full-duplex sound card; Microphone headset (for voice communication)

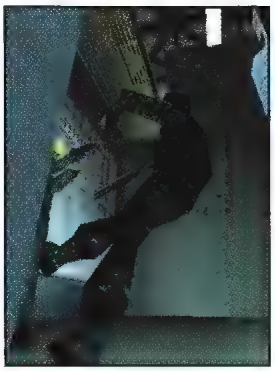
Multi-player: IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 8 (cooperatively) 16 (head-to-head); Free Internet Service: *www.mplayer.com*; Spawnable

Tom Clancy's latest best-seller makes an explosive leap to the PC in this fantastic new game.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

In a year in which heavily hyped shooters like *Half-Life*, *Daikatana*, *Prey*, and *SiN* are basking in the press spotlight long before they hit store shelves, Red Storm Entertainment's little-publicized first-person thriller *Rainbow Six* may ultimately have the last laugh over all of them. From top to bottom, *Rainbow Six* is one of the best and most coherent 3D games we've ever seen — and the best part is that it is nothing like *Quake* or *Unreal*.

Based on Clancy's new novel of the same name, *Rainbow Six* puts you in command of a fictional counter-terrorist unit that has been established to deal with the rising threat of global terrorism. Comprised of members of the best special forces units in the world, this ultra-elite force — code-named "Rainbow" — is the first on the scene whenever and wherever a crisis emerges. But where most first-person shooters would over-exaggerate and simplify the anti-terrorist backdrop with a cache of over-the-top weapons and expect you to blast your way through on your own, *Rainbow Six* takes an infinitely more sophisticated and realistic approach. Using the same military hardware, equipment, and tactics of real-life counter-terror forces, you'll plan and perform precision assaults, hostage rescues, and eliminations at hot-spots all around the world. The result is a game that's just about as close as any of us will ever get to the real thing.

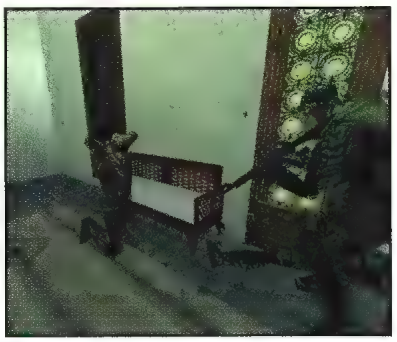


While it's all too easy to fall into *Quake*-style run-and-gun tactics, one wrong move will spell your doom. Check out the exit wound on that guy!

Rainbow Six features two main phases — planning and execution. Once you've been thoroughly briefed on the current crisis and read the latest intel reports, you'll outfit your teams with weaponry, armor, and equipment, then head to the planning screen where you're presented with a blueprint of the mission environment. Here you'll see everything from the insertion point, the layout of all the buildings in the target area, right down to the latest intelligence on where the terrorists, hostages, and mission-critical elements were last seen. With an easy-to-use waypointing system color coded to each of the four available fire teams (Blue, Red, Green, Gold), you plot the course you want each team to take, assign different rules of engagement (clear, advance, blitz, escort), and even define what actions they should take at key locations — breach door, use grenade, flash-bang room, etc. You can also control the timing of your team's movements by using "go codes" to signal when to make their next move. When you're satisfied with the plan, you select the team you wish to control directly and head into the mission itself.

Once in the execution phase, you assume control of one member of your team while the computer-controlled teams follow their pre-plotted course with the precise moves of real-life professionals. The only problem is, no matter how good a plan looks on paper, everything can (and often will) go horribly wrong if you fail to react to the unexpected with swift and lethal action. The terrorists aren't polite enough to stand still and let

Though it is best played from a first-person point of view, the third-person perspective is actually playable thanks to the built in auto-targeting system that tracks targets once they're in range.



I'm sorry sir, we're not allowed to take prisoners. It's nothing personal, honest!

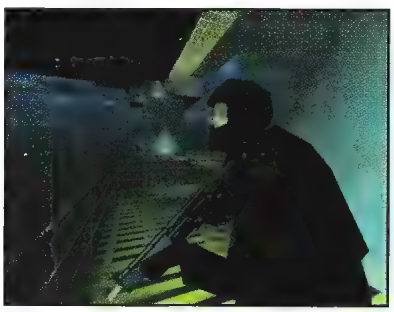
themselves be shot by you or your troops — they'll react to gunfire, patrol hallways, trigger alarms, and even shoot the hostages or trigger bombs if things aren't going their way, and this simple fact weighs heavily in how you play the game. Care and caution must be taken in order to counter any unforeseen hazards. It's imperative that you clear rooms properly, check every corner, maximize your accuracy by moving slow and steady, and never, *ever* let your guard down. Do so for even a second, and you'll most likely be punished with the sickening crunch of a 9mm bullet in the head, delivered by some eagle-eyed terrorist who stepped out from a darkened doorway or a corner you forgot to check.

To build the skills you need in these unpredictable mission environments, there are a number of tutorial scenarios that give you the chance to learn the ropes without suffering any real losses. Just like the techniques used to train real-life anti-terrorist organizations, these assault courses and "kill-houses" are designed to reinforce proper room-clearing procedures when making an assault. It only takes a few runs through these strict scenarios to find out that there's a lot to learn for even the most dedicated player.

Even after completing most of the game's challenging campaign missions, the kill-houses can be a humbling experience as artificial intelligence instructors calmly put a cap in your head if you so much as breathe in the wrong direction.

Each of the 17 levels in the single-player campaign is a unique challenge, requiring wildly different tactics to complete. From a knife-edge hostage rescue operation in the tight confines of a London Embassy to a nail-biting bomb hunt deep inside the labyrinthine corridors of a massive hydroelectric dam, you'll have to remain on your toes and your wits if you hope to survive. Fortunately, the play style is easy to get into; the mouse/keyboard controls will be familiar to anyone who has played *Quake*, and only a few features need to be learned. Crouching, for example, can only be done while stationary, a jump feature is non-existent, and climbing requires the use of the "use" key. Features like the sniper view can be activated at the touch of a button, allowing you to zoom in and take out a terrorist before he knows what hit him.

As you'd expect, the stealthy tactics of the single-player game translate into some tense and exciting multi-player bouts, and the game features several variations that bring terrifying new meaning to the term DeathMatch. There are assault-style scenarios where one team defends while the other tries to sneak a player into a designated zone, and there are even variations that use hostages in a twisted version of Capture the Flag. Traditional every-man-for-himself multiplay is also great fun, but can be a bit boring when played one-on-one because of the game's one-shot, one-kill nature. However, add in a few more players, and you'll have the time of your life as players form competitive teams and engage in squad-level combat. And with the single-player game's team-based formula already in place, cooperative play with up to eight human players against AI terrorists proves to be a challenge all its own.



This Rainbow squad member enjoys a quiet moment of reflection before storming a terrorist-held oil rig that's rigged to explode.

Plan Carefully, Soldier!

INTEL
Operation: Steel Wind
CATEGORIES
ORGANIZATIONS
21:46:23:08
21:46:23:08
British terrorist organization opposed to the integration of the United Kingdom into the European Union. The name "Free Europe" first surfaced in 1996 during a police investigation of an instance of sabotage to the railroad tracks on the British side of the Channel Tunnel. A steel bar was welded to the tracks, resulting in the derailment of a high-speed passenger train, and causing the deaths of four passengers. No arrests were made. Since then the name has also come up in conjunction with several other terrorist incidents, including the firebombing of a block of flats occupied by West African immigrants that killed a four-year-old girl.
Free Europe is believed to be a spin-off of the British neo-Nazi group Combat 18. According to documents recovered by the police, their agenda calls for the deportation of all immigrants of non-European ancestry and a
SAVE PLAN

Know your foe! The intelligence briefings give you a thorough background on all the terror groups you'll encounter during the missions. Pay attention, it might just save your life.

During the planning phase, you can outfit your squad's weaponry, equipment, and armor with a selection of authentic military hardware.

The simple and effective planning screen allows you to plot your troops' movements in the mission ahead.

Though the gameplay and the technology behind *Rainbow Six* is solid and polished, with attractive graphics, accelerator support, and acceptable performance on even modest systems, a few problem areas still need to be worked out. Clipping problems sometimes allow enemies to be spotted behind doors or walls; AI units can get stuck in narrow doorways or passages; the frag grenade radius is too small to be effective in most cases; and characters often disappear in multi-player games. These problems don't ruin the game, but they do take a bit of the shine off an otherwise stellar product.

Minor problems aside, *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six* is an enthralling package loaded to the brim with tense, nail-biting gameplay, slick technology, and excellent replayability. It turns everything you thought you knew about first-person action gaming on its head with exhilarating, often quite profound results.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

93%

HIGHS: Great premise with spot-on presentation. Sharp graphics, excellent control, nice tactical phase, and thrilling gameplay.

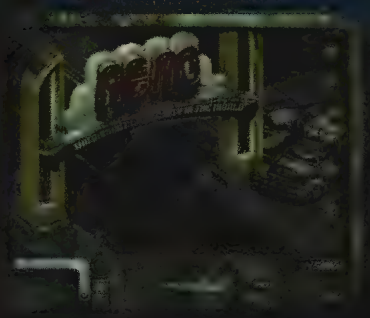
LOWS: A few bugs need to be worked out.

BOTTOM LINE: *Rainbow Six* is undoubtedly one of the most original and best games of the year.

A Classic RPG*

*Minus the faeries, spells, and other crap.

Sequel to the 1997 Role Playing Game of the Year.



Bigger Game World.

Improved Combat AI

Comprehensive RPG System.

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Fallout 2
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PC GAMER

280,852*

Dear readers,

From every one of us at PC Gamer, thanks for once again making us the world's best-selling PC games magazine!

*January – June 1998 average paid circulation, as filed with the Audit Bureau of Circulations and subject to audit.

Motorhead

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category:	Arcade
Developer:	Digital Illusions, Gremlin Interactive
Publisher:	Fox Interactive, (888) 369-0031 *www.foxinteractive.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; P90; 16MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; DirectX 5.0-compatible Super VGA video card	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; P200; 32MB RAM; 3DFX Voodoo Graphics or Voodoo Rush based accelerator; Supported sound card; Joystick/gamepad

Multi-player: Serial/null modem; Modem: 28.8; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum players: 8 (up to 12 with patch version 1.4); Spawnable

Looking for some intense high-speed action? This is just what the doctor ordered.

Even if you're deadly serious about realism in your PC racing simulations, you've gotta admit that sometimes there's nothing quite as satisfying as just hopping in a high-performance car and reveling in the exhilaration of sheer, unadulterated speed. We're talking arcade-style racing, folks, where all you need to know is how to steer, brake, and keep the pedal on the floor as long as possible.

If that's the kind of action you crave, you're in for a treat with *Motorhead*. There's nothing remotely realistic about this racing sim set in the futuristic TransAtlantic Speed League, except for one thing: it does a bang-up job of creating a true sensation of speed. There's no way to fine-tune your car in *Motorhead*: all you do is pick a ride and choose a track. Each of the game's ten cars is rated in only three categories — speed, acceleration, and grip — so you don't need a background in physics to decide which car is best suited to your driving style or the track on which you'll be racing.

The TransAtlantic Speed League circuit consists of eight fictional tracks (though only six are mentioned in the manual), and each one is set in a completely unique environment, from the hazy skies of Red Rock and the urban thoroughfares of Neo City to the scenic shoreline of Olympos. Adding even more to the experience are trackside objects like windmills, office buildings, street lights, and advertisements — and you'll probably jump out of your seat when you see a jet hovercraft zip by overhead as you scream toward the finish line at Goldbridge.

Until you've placed high enough in League races, only two tracks are available — a design decision sure to irritate some gamers.

You can play *Motorhead* without a 3D card, but while the software-rendered graphics are adequate, they don't hold a candle to what you'll see if you've got a 3D card that supports all of *Motorhead*'s visual effects. Translucent lighting, fog, lens flares, shadows, and other fancy flourishes combine to give *Motorhead* an incredible level of visual realism — and that goes a long way toward convincing you that you really are in an incredibly fast racer.

The computer opponents are surprisingly strong, and they'll put up a good fight even on the Easy setting. There's a whole lot of bumping and banging going on, and learning how to push someone while staying on course yourself is vital to success: there's no faster way to pass someone than to nudge him into an abutment. Take a crest in the road at high speed, and you'll actually catch air — in Neo City you can stay airborne for almost a city block! Crashes often result in spectacular flips and rolls, but unfortunately you don't see cars take any damage: you can head back into the fray even if you've smashed into a wall at top speed.

Of course, there's nothing like racing against human opponents, and *Motorhead* is outfitted with a full suite of multi-player options. Modem, serial, LAN, and Internet play are all supported, and as more gamers find out about *Motorhead*, you can expect to see more and more dedicated *Motorhead* servers up and running (there were only a handful online when this issue went to press). Best of all, you can spawn as many multi-player versions of the game as you like, a feature sure to be appreciated by gamers everywhere.

I do have one major gripe with *Motorhead*: you can only race in three cars on two tracks when you first play the game. The only way to gain access to the other cars and tracks is to place high enough in actual League races — and that can add up to frustration if, like me, you have some trouble with one of the first two tracks.

That complaint aside, about the only thing missing in *Motorhead* is... well, a song by Motorhead. Oh well, I guess you can't have everything....

—Stephen Poole

A still screen shot just doesn't do *Motorhead* justice: you really have to see these cars burning down the track to truly appreciate the graphics and gameplay of this racer.

Each of the many tracks in *Motorhead* has a distinct look and feel. The peaceful skies of Atlantika stand in stark contrast to the high-powered mayhem taking place on the streets below.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Graphics create a true sensation of speed; you can spawn many multi-player versions.

88%

LOWS: Limited tracks and cars until you place high enough; no damage to cars during crashes.

BOTTOM LINE: *Motorhead* is satisfyingly hot arcade-style racing action for your PC.

WarGames

Category:	Strategy
Developer:	Interactive Studios
Publisher:	MGM Interactive, (800) 586-2021 *www.mgm.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 35MB hard-drive space; Windows compatible sound card; Mouse	Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based accelerator, 100MB hard-drive space

Multi-player: Serial/Null Modem; Modem: 28.8; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 8; Free Internet Service: *www.mplayer.com*

Don't worry, there's no video of Dabney Coleman or Matthew Broderick in this one: just some decent real-time strategy gaming.

MGM Interactive's *WarGames* adds to a curious but growing sub-genre of movie tie-in computer games: the "Movie So Old That Young Gamers Don't Remember It."

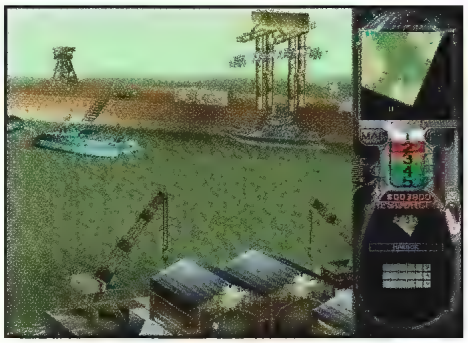
With *WarGames*, however, we actually have a semi-relevant historical artifact, as it was one of the first movies to really deal with video games and computer hackers. This would be more pertinent if the movie and the game were tied together by something more than a few character names and the license, but I guess you can't have everything. While the connection with the film is slim at best, *WarGames* is a surprisingly solid real-time strategy that doesn't rely on fifteen-year-old plot devices. Thankfully, no video footage has been used, and characters like Professor Falken and David Lightman only appear as passing references in briefings.

Among the tsunami of real-time strategy games at the 1997 E3, *WarGames* was one of the few to catch my eye. The attraction was the 3D graphics engine, which added the innovation of full rotation and zooming to the tried-and-trite formula of build base/build guys/whack enemy/ repeat. Of course, Bungie beat them to the shelf with its 3D tactical game *Myth* (and a more attractive one at that), but *WarGames* still looks and plays well. It has no great surprises, but is solid and enjoyable in a genre that is too often neither.

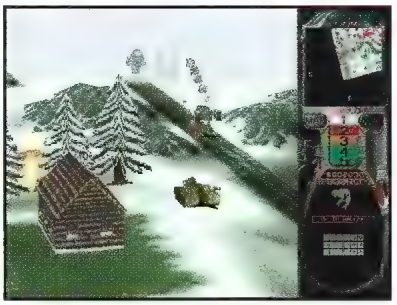
Gamers firing up *WarGames* with the expectation of playing "Global Thermonuclear War" against WOPR will be disappointed. The game essentially takes the premise of a large military computer protecting itself and jettisons the rest of the movie's plot. The Cold War and nuclear elements are gone, to be replaced by a stand-off between the mechanical forces made, deployed, and controlled by WOPR in an attempt to start a global war and the human forces out to stop it. From there, gameplay settles into a comfy pattern of building units and conquering map objectives.

The campaign can be played from either side (human or WOPR) in a series of large-scale missions, but there are no single missions or mission editor, which greatly reduces replay value. Multi-player support for two to eight gamers, with free hosting by MPlayer and IP addressing for TCP/IP games, is stable and flexible. The thirty campaign missions that drive the game are quite strong, with very large maps and multiple objectives.

The game unfolds in a semi-narrative, fluid fashion, as you receive E-mail messages from headquarters, Professor Falken, WOPR, and others. Resource management is largely out of the loop, reduced to gaining funds through "hacker" units that can hack into computers to transfer cash. This cash is then used to build structures and units.



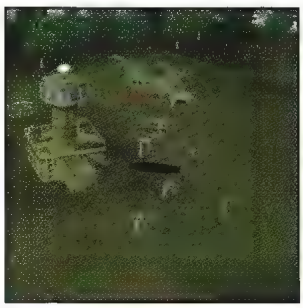
Like most RTS games, naval action is just supplemental to land combat, but it does provide an interesting element both visually and tactically.



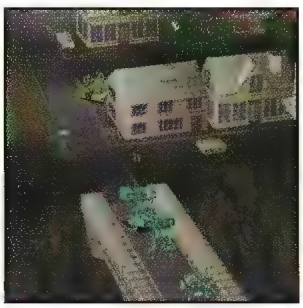
One of WOPR's Mark 1 Walkers comes up the road toward your Dragoon tank.

The backdrop for these missions is a series of effectively rendered, hardware-accelerated 3D terrains that can range from mountains to towns to cities in a single map. Real-world locations like New York and Saudi Arabia are sprinkled among the desert, country, mountain, lowland, tropical, and urban terrains, adding to a sense of realism and narrative cohesion. Visually, they all look marvelous. Rolling hills give way to rivers and oceans. Large buildings loom over battles and terrain-hogging units such as ships create and impressive sense of scale. Lighting, explosions, unit motion, and other visual effects far surpass those in *Total Annihilation*. Variable weather conditions such as snow and rain not only look good, but they also affect movement and performance.

The fully rendered mechanized units look decent, but infantry units look pretty



Infantry units are the weak ingredient in the visual stew: they look almost ready-made for the PlayStation crowd.



The view perspective can be rotated and zoomed, making it possible to get the perfect viewing angle on the action.

These neat little lines of opposing forces aren't really possible in general gameplay, but they sure do look nice, don't they?

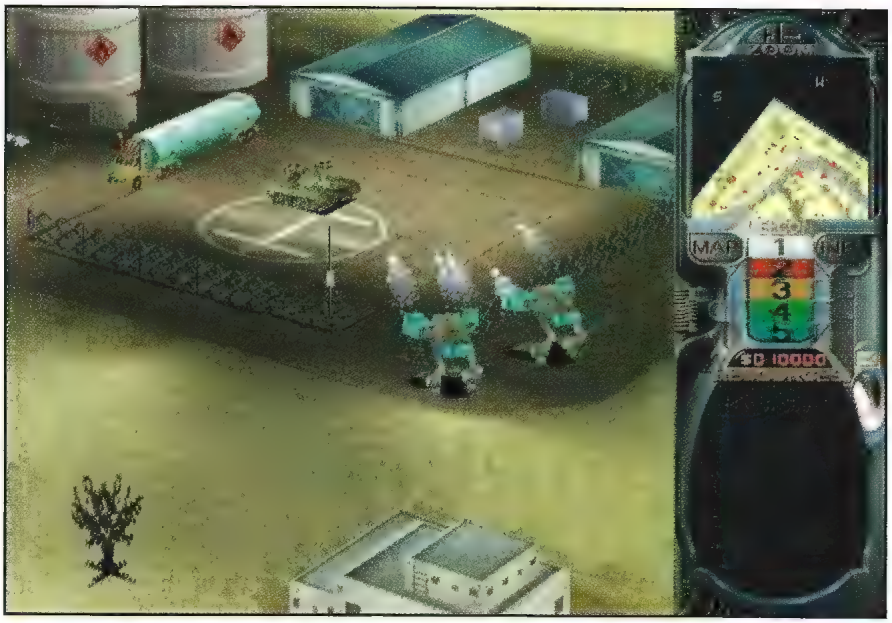
Shall We Play A Game?

The tinny computerized voice of WOPR/Joshua coming through David Lightman's (Matthew Broderick) computer was one of those cultural touchstones of the early 1980s, when kids were getting wired and spending vast amounts of time and money in arcades. Remember the Commodore 64? Then you probably remember this movie and its corny (yet strangely effective) anti-nuclear moral: the only way to win is not to play.

The plot followed teenage misfit Lightman as he attempted to hack into the computer of game-maker Protovision in order to play their unreleased games. Instead, he stumbles upon WOPR, a NORAD computer designed to automatically launch nuclear weapons. He starts up a game of Global Thermonuclear War, only to find out later that WOPR doesn't know it's a game.

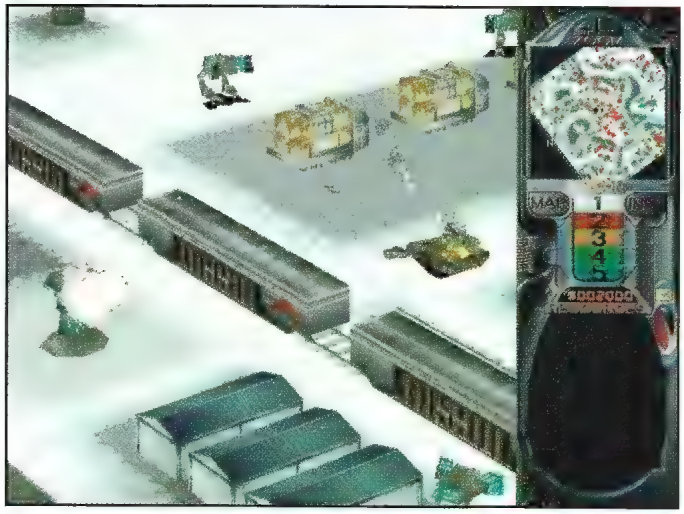
Christopher Null's WarGames fan page (on the Internet at *www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Lab/6440/*) offers a few interesting tidbits:

- Kevin Costner turned down the lead role in WarGames for a part in *The Big Chill* (1983), which was eventually cut.
- The studio had a *Galaga* and a *Galaxians* machine delivered to Matthew Broderick's home, where he practiced for two months to prepare for the arcade scene.
- The TRS-80 Model I used to break into NORAD was programmed to make the correct words appear on the screen, no matter which keys were pressed.
- The exteriors were all filmed in western Washington state. The NORAD HQ set was built in the Cascades, the Oregon airport was really Boeing Field, Goose Island is really Anderson Island, WA (in the southern part of Puget Sound). The last ferry off the island really is at 6:30, and you really are stuck there if you miss it.



Real-time lighting and texture smoothing are two of the visual treats made possible by hardware-acceleration support. Real-world locations are sprinkled among the more exotic locales.

rough. Using only the software renderer, the visual quality takes a sharp dive, and gamers without the necessary graphics card will not find it up to current standards. The simplistic interface and cartoonish infantry units betray *WarGames'* simultaneous development for PlayStation and PC. Almost all information and controls are on the screen at once, and interface commands are reduced to their simplest level. While the ability to group units is supported, along with two movement speeds, a patrol order, an "occupy" order and an attack order, no other sophisticated commands are offered. This will come as a disappointment to gamers used to the more complex control options of RTS games from the past year. Waypointing and artificial intelligence tweaking is not supported at all.



Landscapes are big, diverse, and interesting in *WarGames*, like this rail-yard, which is just a small part of a much larger map.

As with far too many RTS games, pathfinding is a real problem, and unit AI a minor one. Units can find their way across large stretches of map well enough, but they become bunched up with other units too easily. When this happens, they often simply stop. Getting them unstuck takes a major effort, as they reverse, spin, and then run into each other again. Without the ability to set an aggression AI level, units also tend to rush enemies instead of staying put. If grouped and told to stay, they will, however, hold a position. Because of the variable terrain levels, you can set up ambushes and lure units (possibly a little too easily) into valleys in order to fire on them en masse.

From a gameplay standpoint, there are no real surprises in *WarGames*. It is, however, a tight, good-looking, and enjoyable real-time game. God knows we don't need another RTS title, but if they must come, let's hope they manage to be at least as fun and effective as this.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

81%

HIGHS: Effective 3D engine. Large maps with shifting mission goals.

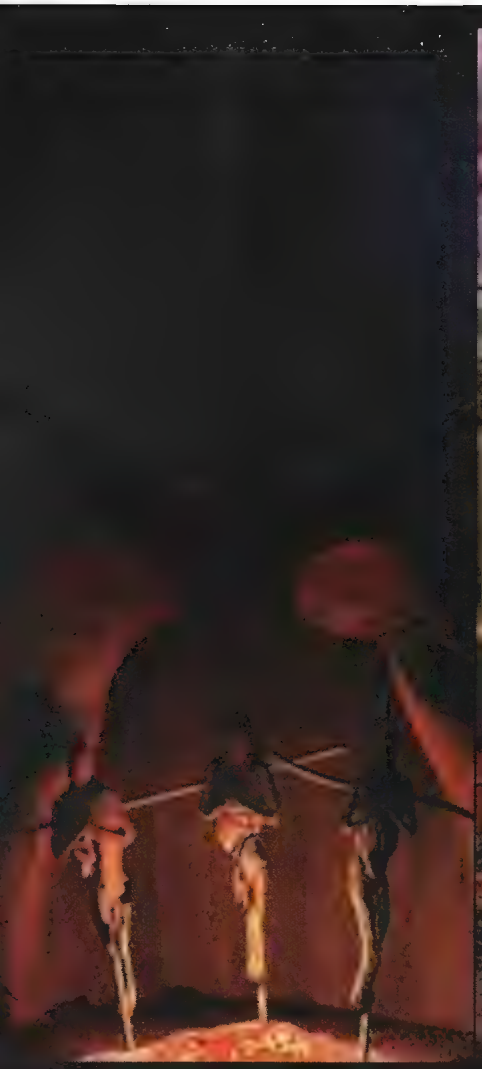
LOWS: Poor pathfinding abilities for the units. Not overly interesting. No single missions or editor.

BOTTOM LINE: Strong gameplay and visuals, but suffers from a lack of mission options.

Actual screen shots.

FINALLY, YOU REMEMBER A DREAM.

"Charts new territory in the breathtaking beauty of the graphics." - Adrenaline Vault



ONLY, IT'S NOT YOURS.

Morpheus employs ground-breaking QuickTime VR technology in creating an adventure that will have you quickly confusing the real with the surreal.

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Revenge of Arcade

Category: Arcade

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Microsoft, (800) 429-9400
www.microsoft.com

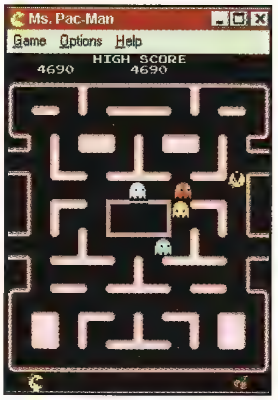
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2 66; 8MB RAM	Pentium; Gamepad

Multi-player: Two-player (one player at a time — just like the arcades)

Since its premiere in 1994, Microsoft's Arcade series has faithfully translated titles from the golden age of videogaming for play on modern day PCs. The series has so far focused on the big arcade classics we know and love — the original pack included a stellar collection featuring *Asteroids, Battlezone, Tempest, Centipede,* and *Missile Command* and subsequent packs have included *Galaxian, Dig-Dug,* and *PacMan* — but Microsoft's latest collection of arcade games shows that not everything from the golden age is worth revisiting.

Revenge of Arcade brings five Namco titles back to life, like it or not; *Ms. Pac Man, Xevious, Mappy, MotoS,* and *Rally X*. However, with the exception of *Ms. PacMan* and *Xevious,* this collection seems to be dredging the bottom of the nostalgia barrel. *Mappy, MotoS,* and *Rally X* are as forgettable now as they were back then and it doesn't take more than a couple of quarters worth of play time to get your fill out of all of them. On the bright side, however, *Ms. PacMan* proves to be the same bubbly vixen we remember from the pizza parlor; it's the most re-playable arcade title of the bunch. The science-fiction shooter *Xevious* has aged fairly well, with challenging gameplay and nice control, but you may find that the color palette isn't as clean and crisp as you remember from the arcades. Yet as good as these two titles are, it's hard to consider either of them in the same top-tier as some of the previous Arcade showpieces (okay, maybe *Ms. PacMan*).

While each title has been painstakingly recreated and features full sound and joystick support, one small side note is the so-so screen size of these conversions. Since each title remains true to its arcade roots where they had long vertical screens, you'll either play in a narrow window or in a full screen with a lot of empty real estate on either side. On a typical 17" computer monitor, this means that the gameplay area is small — about a third of the coin-op screen.



The excellent reproduction of *Ms. PacMan* is an arcade fiend's dream come true.

Though the smaller screen size is overlooked if you're an arcade buff interested in a trip down memory lane, unfortunately, *Revenge of Arcade* is a letdown over previous offerings. Maybe this well has run dry, Microsoft.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

68%

HIGHS: Ms. PacMan still holds her own as an arcade diva.

LOWS: The entire collection of games is fairly weak; screen mode is too small to do each game justice.

BOTTOM LINE: This modest collection of arcade hits and misses is only for nostalgia buffs.

Kuba

Category: Strategy

Developer: Perpetual Motion Enterprises, Inc.

Publisher: Patch Products, (800) 524-4263
www.patchproducts.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 3.x or later; CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard drive space; Super VGA	Pentium; 16MB RAM

Multi-player: Hot seat; Modem; Serial; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum players: 2; Free Internet Service: *www.zone.com*

Of the thousands of board games, only a select few are considered true classics: *Chess, Checkers, Othello, Scrabble,* and so on. While most don't even try to join the exalted ranks (*Battlestar Galactica: The Game,* for example) others, like *Chinese Checkers* and *UpWords,* and now *Kuba,* strive for that intangible greatness but don't quite grab the ring.

Charming in its simplicity, this marble-pushing game is subtly layered with enough strategy to keep it challenging and addictive — for a while. The digital version is faithful to its real-life cousin, so if you're already a diehard fan of the real thing here's what you need to know: the computer game is intuitive, bug-free and visually competent.

For the uninitiated, the basics will be easy to get into; the board consists of a 7x7 grid populated by three groups of marbles: eight each belong to you and your opponent, and thirteen are neutral. You move by choosing one of your marbles and pushing it horizontally or vertically. Any adjacent marbles in its path get pushed along, and the goal is to actually shove all of your opponent's marbles, or a majority of the neutral ones, right off the edge of the board.

How about a game of *Kuba,* right next to this gaping service duct? Though some of the backgrounds are bizarre, the game is surprisingly fun.

The major problem with *Kuba* comes at the end of a long game. When all but a few of the marbles has been forced off the board, the strategy evaporates into a drawn-out stalemate. The PC is an excellent adversary with five skill levels to choose from, but of course human opponents are more fun to play against, and this is one of the few games that offers an entertaining diversion for two people sitting at the same PC.

—Joel Durham

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

78%

HIGHS: This little game is faithful to the board game version and will please its fans.

LOWS: It lacks the magic ingredient to make it a classic; drags when only a few marbles left.

BOTTOM LINE: *Kuba* is exactly what it appears to be; fans of this type of game will enjoy it.

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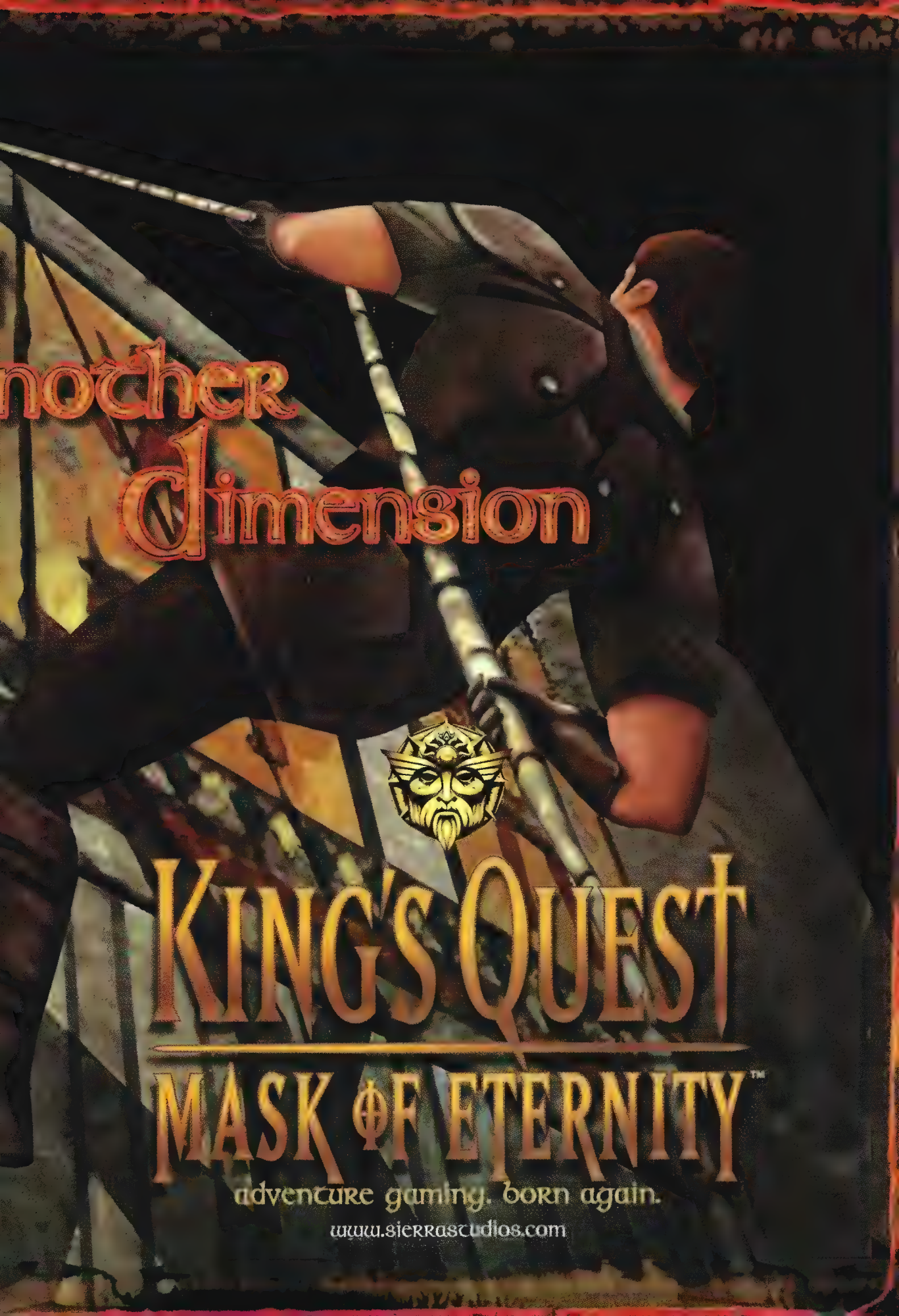
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Bio Freaks

Category:	Arcade
Developer:	Saffire
Publisher:	Midway *www.midway.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Pentium 133; 24MB RAM; SuperVGA video	Pentium 200; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based accelerator; Supported sound card; Gamepad

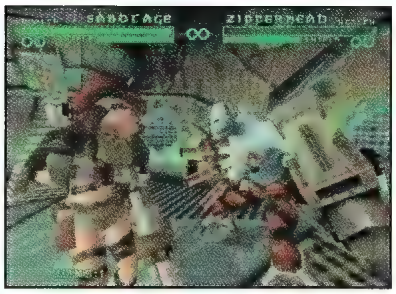
Multi-player: 2 players

Hack off your friends' arms in this gory new fighter from Midway, but be warned — you won't want to let your kids play this.

In a PC market full of unbelievably crappy one-on-one fighting games, it's always a treat when something as different as *Bio Freaks* hits the stands. This title was originally slated for an arcade release, but the success of *Mortal Kombat 4* made product positioning tricky, and the coin-op version was scrapped. It's a good thing the PC version survived — instead of a half-baked fighter along the lines of *Time Warriors* or *Pray for Death*, *Bio Freaks* is actually a twisted little game that's loads of fun.

Like most fighters, *Bio Freaks* is buoyed by an over-the-top science fiction send-up, where the society of the future has found itself obsessed with mutated beasts, biological implants, and copious amounts of raw mayhem. Enter the Bio-F.R.E.A.K.S. (a clever acronym for something or other), the *American Gladiators* of the 21st century. And what a nutty batch they are! The cast of characters range from busty bounty hunters to giant reptiles right out of the cantina scene in *Star Wars*, resulting in a varied menagerie of demented warriors. In fact, the character modelling and animation is *the* best I've seen, and whoever's responsible should get a big fat raise.

The pyromaniacal Purge rains burning hellfire upon Bullzeye. "I am damn unsatisfied to be killed in this fashion!"



After tossing eight javelins into Zipperhead's chest, busty bounty hunter Sabotage evaluates another means of attack.

While the characters are outrageous and the animation excellent, it's the little things that make the difference here, like the completely surprising and shocking opening taunts. Before each match, the fighters go through a little pre-bout taunting — Zipperhead, a biomechanical freak, pounds the ground, beats his chest with bladed implants that are almost the size of his body, and starts drooling. The reptilian Saabo does a *Gamera*-style victory dance, then poignantly vomits. You've really got to see this one in motion to appreciate it — or not.

Of course, the best character animation can't make up for shoddy control — but fortunately, *Bio Freaks* plays relatively well. The control scheme is loosely based on *Tekken*, with a button for each limb. You've also got a long-range missile attack, plus jet boosters that give you full run of the arena (these can be turned off if you're a fighting purist). Stringing together different key presses to pull off combos isn't possible, making the gameplay a little stiff — you need to learn the special moves (not a problem, with online documentation available when you pause the game).

But what makes *Bio Freaks* so twisted is the almighty "Mutilation Move" system. If you pull off one of these in the midst of battle, you can actually lop off arms... and the match keeps going! Even though your opponent may have two spewing bloody stumps on the sides of their torso, that can't stop 'em from kicking you to death. The particle blood effects are delightfully realistic, and the arterial spray flies everywhere and actually splatters *on the screen*. Take that, Senator Leiberman!

"Hullo, I'm Zipperhead, and I'm friendly." Even though he's got blades lodged in what's left of his arm, we assure you that he's a little kitty-cat.

The hazardous 3D arenas do a good deal for gameplay. In most fighters, you're limited to walking forward and backward, but *Bio Freaks* lets you go wherever you please. You can devise some pretty nasty setups where you body-slam your opponent from two stories up, or chuck 'em into bladed metal rollers (ooh!). There's a little disorientation, though — if both characters are using their jet boosters to fly around, the camera system will occasionally get confused.

To get the most out of *Bio Freaks*, you'll probably need at least a P200 with a 3Dfx card. *Bio Freaks* has a native Glide mode, and — surprise, surprise! — OpenGL support, which should appease the non-3Dfx crowd out there.

All in all, *Bio Freaks* is a goofy little game that's a hit at parties — just remember that it's been rated "M" for a reason, and the blood may be too much for some people to stomach (my local newspaper has *already* run one angry editorial about this one). It's not going to replace *Virtua Fighter 2* as the top PC fighting game, but you've just gotta love those heads-a-poppin'.

—Colin Williamson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

79%

HIGHS: Bloody good graphics and animation, innovative gameplay.

LOWS: The camera can get confused during spirited fights and the over-the-top amounts of gore may offend.

BOTTOM LINE: *Bio Freaks* isn't the best fighter in town, but it's good for a few morbid laughs.

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Flesh Feast

Category:	Action
Developer:	SegaSoft
Publisher:	SegaSoft, (888) 734-2763 *www.segasoft.com*

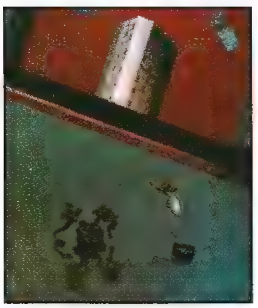
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; D3D Accelerator with 4MB RAM	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based accelerator

Multi-player: Modem: 28.8 (w/Java enabled browser for Internet play on Heat.net); IPX; Maximum players: 8; Free Internet Service: *www.heat.net*

Despite a creepy story, *Flesh Feast* proves that you can make a boring zombie game if you try hard enough.

On the surface, *Flesh Feast* seems to have all the markings of a great horror game. There are loads of zombies; a story that would make George Romero proud and all the blood and severed limbs you can handle. Unfortunately, the game never really progresses beyond the superficial and in the end reveals itself to be a very tedious action game that just happens to have zombies in it.

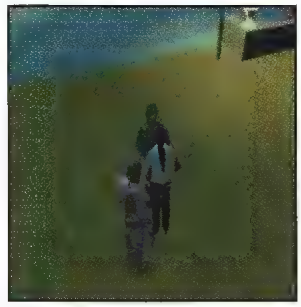
Flesh Feast is set on NASAT Island, an exclusive resort owned by Nutrition Applied Science and Technologies. The island has always been a kind of Eden for its inhabitants, and it's said that once you experience the good life there you'll never want to leave. That all changes, however, when rumors get out about people being manhandled and ejected from the island for engaging in some harmless fun. Then there's an explosion at the island's main factory — shortly thereafter people begin to die, only to rise from the grave with an insatiable hunger for tangy human flesh. You play as one of three people: tabloid reporter Carol Chang; Steve McLaine, friend of the scientist killed in the factory explosion; or Special Agent Williams, sent to the island to uncover the truth. Each character is joined by a few others and given a set of missions. To successfully complete the game, you must guide each of them through this hellish night of munching dead while trying to discover the cause of this madness.



There is gore-o-plenty, but it's not enough to save this game from oblivion.

There are two ways to play *Flesh Feast* — Strategic mode, which seems to be based on the real-time strategy model of control (select a character, tell them where to go/what to do and off they go); and Direct mode, where you have complete control over one person at a time. The strategy mode is an interesting idea, allowing you to control multiple characters at a time, but it's one that fails horribly. The interface is so clunky that it's nearly impossible to switch between the characters fast enough to keep them alive — especially if you need to switch from a long range weapon to a melee attack. Unfortunately, the direct mode proves no better at handling multiple characters and after trying the game in both Strategic and Direct mode, I simply gave up and took direct control over my main character, leaving everyone else as zombie appetizers.

The view kills all suspense in this game. How are those zombies supposed to scare you if you can see them a mile away?



Up close, everything looks like crap. There are no defining features; the colors blend into a mess.

Beyond the poor controls and interface, *Flesh Feast* fails in many other regards as well. The graphics are very poor (even when using hardware acceleration), which makes it difficult to identify the items that you need to pick up. The character models are no bargain either, as they are fuzzy and unrefined, with very limited movement schemes — the character model of Carol Chang is so bad it doesn't even look like a woman! Even the spraying blood looks bad.

There is also no sense of atmosphere. For a game that hyped itself as being gory and true to the zombie mythos, there is no effort to scare the player. Unlike *Resident Evil*, which built tension and provided genuine thrills, *Flesh Feast* telegraphs its frights due to its default top-down view, which allows you to see the zombies coming a mile away. In terms of horror, *Flesh Feast* is as tepid as tap water.

Perhaps the greatest travesty is the fact that *Flesh Feast* has a great story in which you have zero participation. The vast majority of the levels are simple key-finding exercises, and the progression of the story actually occurs in cut-scenes and text introductions/conclusions that frame each level. Even the ending (where the secret of NASAT is revealed) merely consists of you finding your way out before the place blows. There is no big confrontation with the forces of darkness, no final stand against the zombie hordes as your ammo runs low, no ultimate sacrifice to save humanity. Just lots and lots of running.

Going into this game, I was looking forward to some good, old-fashioned zombie-killing fun. What I got instead was a boring game of mazes and keys that I had to force myself to finish.

—William Harms

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

32%

HIGHS: It's got zombies in it!

LOWS: Poor graphics; no gamepad support; gets tedious; not scary; crappy interface.

BOTTOM LINE: Once you get past the fact that there are zombies wandering around, this is just another boring "find the key" action game.

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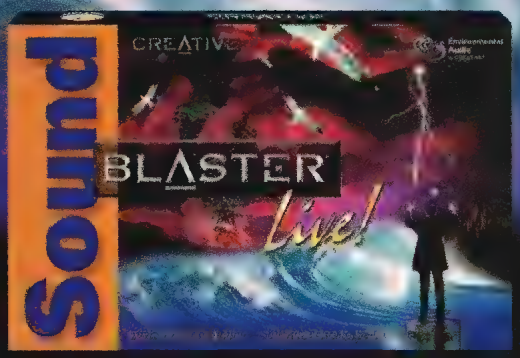

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  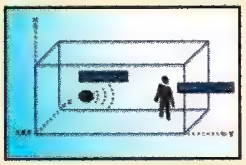

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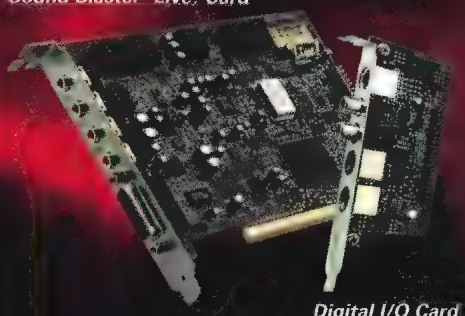

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Get Medieval

Category:	Arcade
Developer:	Monolith Productions, Inc. and Takarajimasha, Inc.
Publisher:	Monolith Productions, (800) 421-4263 *www.lith.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90MHz; 16MB RAM; 20-40MB hard-drive space	Windows 95; Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133MHz; 32MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; 28.8kbps modem; Gamepad

Multi-player: Four-players via hot seat play; Serial/null modem; Modem: 14.4; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum players: 4; Free Internet service: *www.mplayer.com*

This will invoke feelings of nostalgia for long-time gamers, but even they'll discover that the old ways aren't always the best ways.

It's one of the oldest marketing strategies in the book: once your target audience reaches a certain age, start selling them the same stuff that was popular when they were in their late teens and twenties. Take pop music, for example. Have you noticed how many ads are running for "Best of the Eighties," "AM Classics," and other compilations? The concept is based on two principles: that people in their mid- to late-thirties have plenty of disposable income, and that most people's tastes in entertainment change little after they turn 30.

And we're seeing the same thing in the game industry now that it's been around for the requisite 15 or 20 years necessary for the ploy to work. This year alone, we've seen the release of updated versions of *Frogger* and *Battlezone*; GT Interactive is planning to ship *Loderunner 2* in the early fall; Microsoft has released yet another collection of arcade hits; and Activision's busy at work on remakes of Atari classics like *Asteroids* and *River Raid*.

Now Monolith Productions is hopping on the retro bandwagon with *Get Medieval*, but there's a catch: there *wasn't* a hit game called *Get Medieval*. *Get Medieval* is actually a slick update of Atari's supremely addictive four-player coin-op *Gauntlet*. But while the name has been changed and the graphics updated, *Get Medieval* is still pretty much *Gauntlet*, with the same charms and limitations of that golden oldie.

Get Medieval lets you and up to three other players explore a dungeon that's bursting at the seams with monsters of all shapes and sizes — everything from puny bats and spiders to orcs, wraiths, ogres, trolls, and more. Just as in *Gauntlet*, you play as one of four characters — in this case, Eryc the Archer, Kellina the Avenger, Levina the Sorceress, and Zared the Barbarian — that have varying strengths in three categories: weapon speed, weapon strength, and foot speed. Zared, for instance, has the strongest weapons but moves the slowest; Eryc is as fast as lightning, but his arrows do the least damage.

Portals can transport you to rooms full of great treasure, but don't grab every single thing in sight — you might need those power-ups later when your life meter is running low.

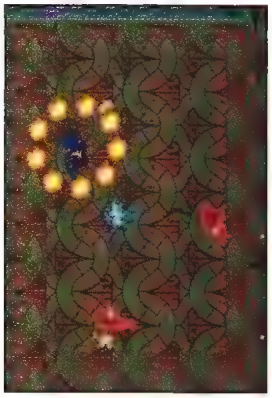
Naturally, monsters aren't all you'll find in the dungeons. Besides the countless piles of gold left lying around, there are all sorts of power-ups to boost your health, give you the power to cast magical spells, and increase your offensive and defensive strength; unfortunately, the power-ups are vulnerable to your weapons, so if you're not careful you can wipe out a much-needed goody. As you move deeper into the game, new dangers appear — lava puddles that will set you alight if you touch them, tar puddles that slow your movement to a crawl, thieves who'll grab your weapons and money, stun plates that shock and paralyze you, and curses that reverse the game controls or double the effects of gravity.

So what does *Get Medieval* do that *Gauntlet* didn't? Aside from much better graphics, the answer is not very much. The most noticeable change is that the characters chatter as they run around the dungeons, and each has a distinct personality: Eryc is a wisecracker; Kellina's a classy grrrl-warrior obsessed with proving she's the equal of any man, Zared is a Schwarzenegger clone, and Levina's a sultry temptress with a double-entendre always on the tip of her tongue. The other big improvement is a complete array of multi-player modes, including support for play over a modem, serial link, a LAN, or the Internet (there's an option to play on Mplayer, but it wasn't on the service at press time).

Each character you can play has a rating in each of three categories. Eryc the Archer is nimble, but his arrows deliver the least damage.

But all the multi-player options in the world don't mean a thing if the game itself isn't fun — and it only takes a few hours for *Get Medieval* to wear out its welcome. Sure, new monsters and power-ups appear as you progress, but it's just not enough to overcome the mind-numbing, repetitive gameplay. *Get Medieval* might be a nice diversion for young kids (except for Levina's slightly saucy language and the animated gore), or for *Gauntlet* freaks who never got over their coin-op experience and simply *must* have a new fix, but aside from that about all it truly excels at is showing how far game design has advanced in the last 10 or 15 years.

—Stephen Poole



The Fire Shield power-up will allow you to cut a fiery swath through monsters.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

65%

PROS: Simple gameplay; an option to turn off the gore makes this nice for young kids.

CONS: It's *Gauntlet* with better graphics and wisecracks; but that's not enough to save it.

BOTTOM LINE: Okay for the kiddie set, but serious gamers will tire of the repetition.

Rampage: World Tour

Category: Arcade

Developer: Point of View

Publisher: Midway
www.midway.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; Mouse	Pentium 200; Gamepad

Multi-player: 3 players on one machine; IPX; Maximum players: 3

Turn your favorite international hot-spots into flaming wreckage in this revamped version of an arcade classic.

Eating things like chicken and humans increases your health, but munching on couches and TV sets gives you a monster-sized case of indigestion.

Whenever a company announces that it's producing a "retro" version of one of its aging hits, my Pavlovian response is to grit my teeth in terror and expect the worst. After the regrettable *Frogger*, I'm wary of any game that promises to wring new fun from a ten-year old arcade hit. Fortunately, Midway's new *Rampage: World Tour* avoids the pitfalls of most retro-games: it remains in two dimensions, adds a few new features that don't hamper the gameplay, and maintains the wackiness — and more importantly, the spot-on control — of its predecessor.

For you young'uns who haven't experienced the destructive goodness of the arcade classic *Rampage*, this is a game where you play one of three classic movie monsters, mutated to super-size and ready to total anything in their paths. The main goal is to destroy all the buildings in the current city by smashing them to the ground, while avoiding (or eating) pesky, dynamite-tossing humans.

Rampage: World Tour manages to expand upon the classic with a few new features. For starters, the playfield scrolls to the left and right, so you're no longer limited to a single screen. Since there are more buildings to destroy, the gameplay has been sped up, and the monsters have some new moves — an added kick button lets you pound on the sides of buildings with your feet and a flying kick lets you take out helicopters Van Damme-style. As you smash windows, you can reach into buildings and grab a variety of power-ups. Some let you breathe fire, while others will transform you into a purple version of *Mothra*. And as the game's title indicates, picking up different country flags lets you travel to exotic (and tasty) hot-spots like Tokyo and Kathmandu. And, as expected, two of your buddies can join you in the fun via daisy-chained joypads, or over a local area network.

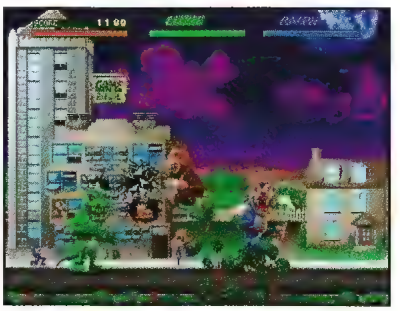
Though the animation and overall visual design is fine, I have a little problem with the graphics — the basic window size is only 400x255, so running the game full-screen results in a chunky pixel-fest. I also experienced mediocre performance in the full-screen mode, and the game ran far better in a window. It's probably more a matter of bad programming than hardware limitations — games like *Claw* and *Jazz Jackrabbit 2* were able to crank out full-screen, high-res scrolling without a hitch. The keyboard and joystick setup screens are also *really* bad — if you're gonna do a PC port, do it right.

In terms of gameplay, *Rampage*'s one blemish is the number of lives you get. *Rampage* has always had an insane number of levels, and beating all of them required a sock full of quarters and several hours. The PC version gives you infinite lives from the get-go, meaning that you don't really have to worry about death. It's like playing through *Quake* with God mode stuck in the "on" position — meaning that instead of playing until you run out of credits, you'll simply stomp until you get bored, and that's no fun at all.

But if you're disciplined enough *not* to play the game the whole way through in the first sitting, you'll probably get a great deal of enjoyment out of *Rampage: World Tour*. Midway knows something that other developers would be a lot better off realizing — if it ain't broke, you don't have to fix it.

—Colin Williamson

World Tour includes a few mini-games that provide short diversions from the destruction. Nothing you'll miss, though.



The three-player mayhem is just as sweet as it was in the arcades ten years ago. Buddy up and eat some tourists!

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

69%

HIGHS: It doesn't screw up the *Rampage* formula. And the three-player mode is fun, fun, fun!

LOWS: Graphics and some animations are chunky.

BOTTOM LINE: Pretty good fodder for fans of the aging arcade game.

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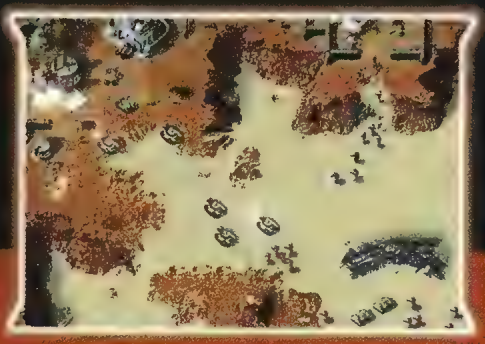

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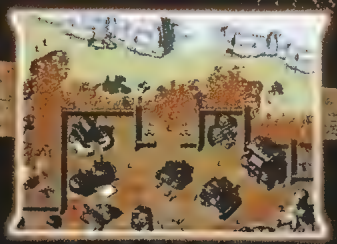

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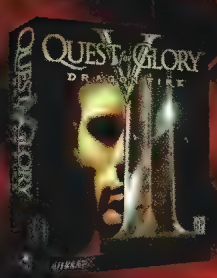

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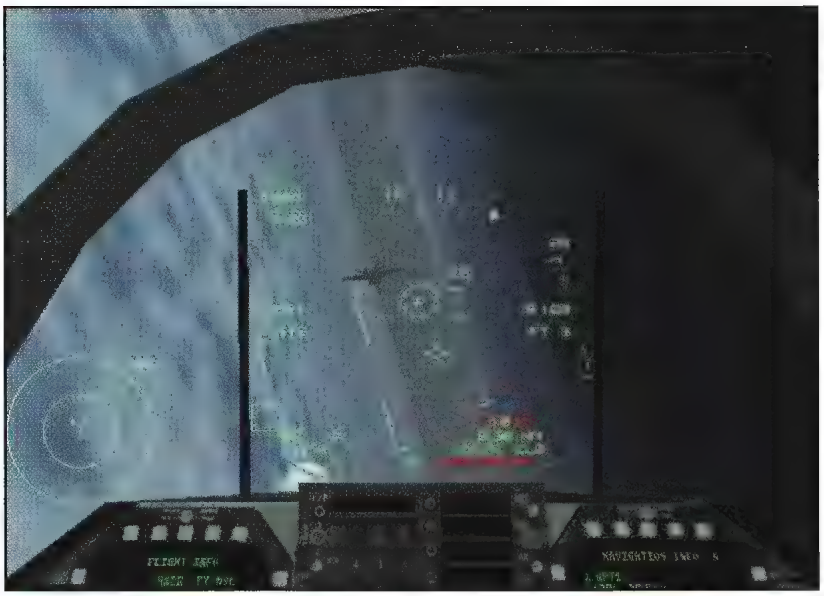
JetFighter: Full Burn

Category:	Simulation
Developer:	Mission Studios
Publisher:	Interplay, (800) 969-GAME *www.interplay.com*

Required	We Recommend
DOS 5.0; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; 1MB SVGA video card	Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx-based 3D accelerator; 240MB hard-drive space; SoundBlaster compatible sound card

Multi-player: Spawnable: CD required, any of the four CDs included is sufficient; IPX Play and Internet (via Kali); Maximum players: 8

In spite of its quirks, flying the user-friendly skies of the latest JetFighter installment offers quite a bit of fun for the casual sim fan.



This bandit is going down! The visuals in *Full Burn* are the best in the *JetFighter* series, but they pale in comparison to other, modern flight sims from folks like Jane's.

Fans of the alternative group Pavement will be familiar with the term lo-fi. The group became synonymous with that expression by making records — good ones — without using state-of-the-art technology. The resulting sound is rough and gritty, and absolutely perfect for Pavement's style.

It's perhaps apt that I grabbed a Pavement CD to listen to as I reviewed *JetFighter: Full Burn*. This game is the digital embodiment of lo-fi. For example, *Full Burn* is a DOS-based title; it's optimized for Windows 95, but it will run in pure DOS mode just fine. The downside of that is, if you've gotten used to the ease of setting up games that pick up your system specs through DirectX, configuring *Full Burn* will cause flashbacks: you'll have to set up your sound card right down to specifying IRQs and DMAs; *Full Burn* will autodetect, but it missed the mark with my Guillemot Game Theater 64. Such is (or was) life with DOS.

Full Burn uses the same game engine as *JetFighter III*, and it's not aging gracefully. The terrain still looks pretty, and systems with a 3Dfx-based accelerator will see smooth frame rates and decent texture quality. Unfortunately, no other cards are supported. Accelerated or not, though, the dated look of *Full Burn* doesn't stand up next to current titles like EA's *Jane's F-15* and Mindscape's *Team Apache*. You won't find glowing effects around the missiles, detail in the virtual cockpit is blocky and the horizon is cut short by a once-forgivable, now-annoying haze.

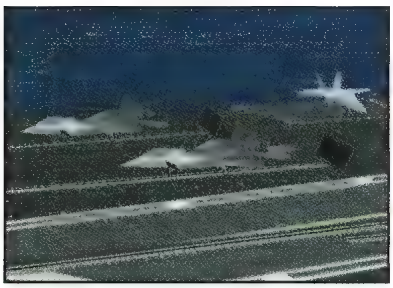
Furthermore, *Full Burn* offers the same planes as *JFIII*, the F/A-18 Hornet and the F-22 Lightning II, with the addition of the Russian MiG-42. It would have been nice to see a few new U.S. fighters; perhaps an F-15 or, considering that the campaign is set several years in the future, an F-117 stealth fighter.

I happen to be a member of the group of casual sim fans that made *JFIII* a hit. Having been looking forward to *Full Burn*, I was, to put it mildly, disappointed with the poor first impression I experienced after I first loaded it up. Thankfully, first impressions aren't always accurate.

Full Burn has quite a bit to offer fans of *JFIII*, as well as gamers who would like to load up a good sim but have been turned off by the realistic complexity of other titles. It's incredibly accessible, with a well written, friendly manual and a battery of comprehensive tutorials that take you from the basics of flight to advanced air combat in gradual steps.

Adding to the ease is a very simple flight model. If you've ever flown anything on a PC before, strapping into a fighter in *Full Burn* will be a breeze. None of the planes you'll fly are much harder

Between missions, you'll be treated to an ongoing storyline reminiscent of the Wing Commander games; the CO in the briefing room is one of the few capable actors.



You don't *have* to master the art of carrier landings with the "auto land" feature, but the challenge is fun if you want to try.

to control than a *Wing Commander* spacefighter. Of course, that takes away heavily from the realism; there's not a noticeable difference in controlling any of the three jets offered, it's almost impossible to go into a spin, and you don't have to worry about any nagging little details such as, well, aerodynamics. To test the realism of *Full Burn's* physics, I hopped into an F-22, flew up to 40,000 feet and then rocketed straight down with full afterburners. At more than 1,000 knots, I was able to pull up at under 600 feet and fly away unscathed, without the momentum carrying my plane into the ground or causing it to break up.

In spite of that — or *because* of it, depending on your tastes — flying the missions in *Full Burn* is pure fun. Included on the four CDs are dozens of missions, ranging from the mundane fighter patrol sweeps and single target elimination to a few very creative and fun scenarios. There's a particularly cool one in which you have to intercept a cruise missile that's been launched at your fleet, all the while dodging SAMs and flak.

There are two campaigns to play, representing US and Russian sides of a conflict between Russia and Norway. In each, you work your way through a *Wing Commander* style movie narrative, complete with mediocre actors. Though you can go ahead and navigate through your base through a *Myst*-like interface, a convenient menu lets you jump to pertinent locations such as the briefing room, your quarters, and the hangar. While there's no need to follow the story lines, the FMV is amusing in a campy sort of way.

This F-22 is one of three planes you'll fly in *Full Burn;* some other more modern jets would have been welcome.

Though the action is easy to get into and thoroughly enjoyable, there are a few gameplay issues that could have been better. When it's time to fly, you'll be thoroughly briefed by your CO (the best actor of the bunch) and it's off to the hangar. But while you can choose between several ready made-loadouts appropriate for various types of missions, you can't modify them or create your own.

Taking out this enemy ship was a snap with the unrealistic but newbie-friendly weapons interface.

Once in the cockpit, you'll find yourself frequently referring to an included quick reference chart. The default keyboard control layout is about as intuitive as UNIX. I couldn't get *Full Burn* to recognize my Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback's hat switch, nor support its force feedback capabilities; *Full Burn* only talks to CH Force FX sticks for that. In fact, *Full Burn's* native joystick support doesn't refer to a lot of joysticks to come out in the past year or two.

Another feature that *Full Burn* only partially supports is multi-player. *JetFighter III* fans have been crying out for it and *Full Burn* delivers... up to a point. Unfortunately, the only modes supported are IPX and Kali. There's no sign of TCP/IP or direct modem-to-modem, which is popular among flight sim fans. Apparently, robust multiplayer support was on the same list as Direct3D, DirectInput, RedBook audio and the rest of the modern features we've come to take for granted in current games, but which are absent here.

Despite all of the game's numerous faults, I can't deny that it's eating up a lot of my time and, when I finish this review, I'll jump right back in the cockpit. If you want a sim that's super-easy to fly and don't care too much about options or tech performance, find a copy of The Velvet Underground's *White Light/White Heat,* load up *JetFighter: Full Burn* and go to town.

—Joel Durham

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

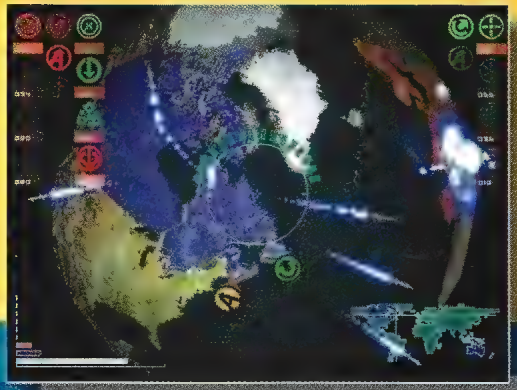
74%

HIGHS: Extremely accessible; playable; downright addictive.

LOWS: Virtually everything about this game feels old; non-intuitive controls.

BOTTOM LINE: *JetFighter* is still a good pick for the casual sim fans out there, but it's past time for a new game engine.

Stood up by a blonde?



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Mortal Kombat 4

Category:	Arcade
Developer:	Eurocom Developments
Publisher:	Midway *www.midway.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 24MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; Direct3D compatible video card	Pentium 200; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics based accelerator; Gamepad

Multi-player: 2 players on one computer

The carnage-crazed Mortal Kombat series goes 3D. Kan you kompete against the krazed kabal of kombatants?

Midway's Mortal Kombat series has gone through a series of ups and downs. While *Mortal Kombat 2* managed to improve upon the fast-paced, gore-galore formula of the original, the third incarnation didn't fare nearly as well. *MK3* suffered from monkeywrenched gameplay, needlessly stupid finishing moves like "Animalities," and unbearably campy character designs (remember the mall-cop with the enormous ass?). And after the cataclysmic *War Gods*, Midway's first entry into the 3D fighting field, everyone assumed that the next *Kombat* would be, well, krap. Surprisingly, *MK4* has turned out a little better then expected, re-injecting some of the atmosphere and humor of the first two games — but it's still no world-beater.

I prefer my ninjas well-done. The mystical Scorpion unleashes his breath of fire.

Raiden serves up a little Sonya Blade shish-ke-bab. With a cool hat and a big hammer, Raiden always wins!

The story is the usual incoherent nonsense about an Elder God getting loose and causing havoc, so it's up to the Mortal Kombatants to bludgeon each other until natural order is restored to the universe. Luckily, the story does have some saving graces — the sorry characters of *MK3* have gotten the axe, and favorites from the original cast are back, including Johnny Cage, Raiden, and a new fella who looks like "Lurch" from *The Addams Family*.

There's barely any difference in gameplay from the other *MK* games —just beat the stuffing out of your opponent before the timer runs out. To make things more interesting, each character carries a weapon that can be whipped out at opportune times. Rocks and skulls are scattered around the playing field, so it's possible to toss something big and heavy at your opponent.

If the eight-button control scheme seems baffling, keep in mind that three of them can be overlooked — the plane-shift buttons don't do much in the 3D arenas, and the run button is utterly worthless. However, if you're looking for depth, look somewhere else. In fighters like *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Last Bronx*, each character had a totally different *feel* due to individual movesets; in *MK4*, each character's play is nearly identical.

This is the first time *Mortal Kombat* has gone 3D, and it shows. The polygon models don't seem quite as refined as the arcade version, and suffer from flickery joints syndrome — but at least the game can run at 60fps on a modest system. Some things are harder to forgive; a few of the animations are appallingly bad — Johnny Cage's win pose looks like it was motion-captured from one of the mechanical Christmas elves you see at the mall — and even the blood effects are disappointing. You'd think Midway would have made the gore more realistic than flying red lego bricks. Still, the voices sound like they were sampled from Rudy Ray Moore's classic *Dolemite*, and that's okay by me.

And then we've got the fatalities. Good lord! While the finishing moves of the first three games could be classified as "cartoon violence," *MK4*'s border on the disturbing. This is *not* a game for the kiddies — unless you're comfortable with the wee ones watching someone's face get gnawed off, or an immolated victim running in circles and screaming bloody murder. (My personal favorite is the fatality where your character sends your foe flying into an enormous cooling fan.)

However, when you strip away the shock value, *MK4* hasn't changed much since its original debut four years ago. If you're a fan of the series, or you've got an itch to play a merely competent fighting game, knock yourself out — but more discerning fighting fans should stick with *VF2* or maybe try out Midway's other offering this month, *Bio Freaks*.

—Colin Williamson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

66%

HIGHS: Lightning-fast gameplay; amusing fatalities.

LOWS: Board-stiff animation, cheesy special effects, and questionable depth.

BOTTOM LINE: *Mortal Kombat 4* is a competent addition to a mediocre series, but there are better PC fighting games out there.

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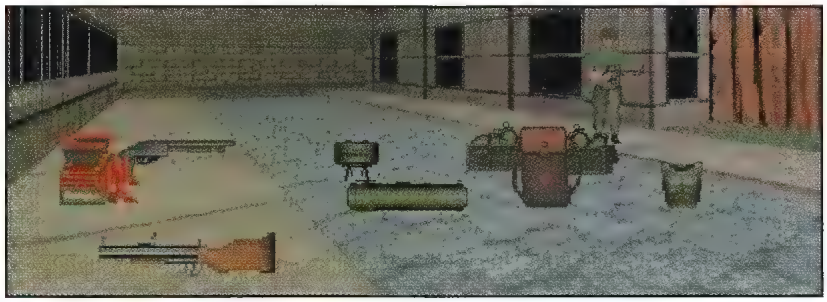
Category:	First-person shooter
Developer:	GT Interactive
Publisher:	GT Interactive, (800) 305-3390 *www.gtinteractive.com*

Required	We Recommend
486 DX4 100MHz; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 16MB RAM; 60MB hard-drive space	Pentium 133MHz; Video card capable of running at 640x580x256; 28.8kbps modem; Sound Blaster 16 or compatible sound card

Multi-player: Serial/null modem; Modem: 14.4; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum players: 8

NAM makes bold claims to realism, but this last waltz for the Build engine plays more like _Duke Does Da Nang_ than real jungle combat.



Rule number one: Your CO will expect you to pick up all your supplies before you head out on a mission. Hmmm... that's quite a load for anyone to carry, even if they are nicknamed "Bear."

Growing up watching footage from the Vietnam War on the news every night, I thought I knew as much about it as anyone could who didn't fight there — until I played *NAM*, which claims to "realistically bring the experiences of the Vietnam War to life."

Until I played *NAM*, I always assumed that a grunt who stepped on a land mine was either dead meat or would only be traveling via stretcher. But *NAM* taught me that as long as a soldier was reasonably healthy — say, at about 60 percent of his full strength — he could stomp on a land mine and still keep slugging through the jungle. And that's not all: if he was lucky enough to have a medkit on him, he could get back to full strength in just a couple of seconds.

I always thought it took a while for an air strike to arrive, but *NAM* taught me that our flyboys were always just overhead and would drop their bombs about two seconds after your request.

Don't worry if you get injured: In this version of the Vietnam War, all you need to find is a big box with a Red Cross insignia on it and you're as good as new.

Hell, I never knew that the NVA or Viet Cong left grenades and ammo for M-16 and M-60 machine guns lying around. And silly, silly me — I didn't know that the way you prepped for a mission was to run around your start point looking for weapons, ammo, mines, medical kits night-vision goggles, and other goodies lying all over the place.

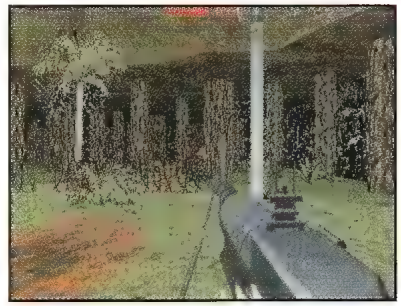
I'm kidding, of course, but you get my point: to say that *NAM* offers the "true experience" of the Vietnam War is not only a joke, it might well be considered offensive by someone who lived through one of the most hellish wars this country's ever waged. The manual explains your character's ability to take multiple hits and rejuvenate himself instantaneously because he's been given an "experimental serum," but that flies in the face of claims to realism, doesn't it?

That's not to say there aren't some aspects of *NAM* that more or less accurately reflect the dangers and hazards of combat in Vietnam. Enemies blend almost seamlessly into the dense jungle foliage, and players who charge ahead like they're playing *Shadow Warrior* or *Duke Nukem 3D* will learn just how vital stealth was to survival. Punji sticks and other booby traps are a constant threat, and just as in real life, there's always the chance of taking damage from bombs meant for the enemy.

In several of the game's 14 single-player missions you're accompanied by AI marines (demolitions, infantry, medic, and radioman), and these computer controlled troops can be a big help — provided you can keep them alive, that is, something I was never able to do for very long given the hordes of nearly invisible enemies laying down fire from a distance.

But make no mistake: this is *Duke Nukem* set in Vietnam, with the main exception being that it doesn't look as good as *Duke Nukem* or, for that matter, play as well. The graphics here are the blockiest I've seen in a game using the ancient Build engine, and surprisingly it runs even slower than *Redneck Rampage Rides Again* (which features the slickest Build-based graphics ever).

NAM would be a total waste of time if it weren't for one thing: its multi-player action. Multi-player modes include the usual Gruntmatch (deathmatch) and



***NAM* does portray one aspect of the Vietnam War accurately: you won't know where enemy fire is coming from most of the time.**

Capture the Flag, but it's the Fireteam mode that really saves the day. One or two hits and you're history in Fireteam mode, and knowing that you're out of the game once you're dead means you must move slowly and cautiously as you advance and always be ready to find cover when all hell breaks loose.

NAM will be roundly criticized (and rightfully so) for its false claims to realism and its sub-par graphics. But if you can look past those faults, you might find your money's worth in the multi-player mode — especially at the $19.99 price tag.

Stephen Poole

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

53%

HIGHS: The multi-player game can be pretty fun.

LOWS: Awful hi-res graphics; the claim of "realistically bringing the Vietnam War to life" is an out-and-out farce.

BOTTOM LINE: You might get your money's worth out of the multi-player game.

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Team Apache

Category:	Simulation
Developer:	Simis
Publisher:	Mindscape, (415) 895-2000 *www.mindscape.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 2MB RAM Super VGA video card; 250MB hard-drive space; Windows compatible sound card; Mouse	Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based accelerator card; Joystick; Throttle; Rudders

Multi-player: Modem: 28.8; Serial/Null Modem: 2 players; IPX: 2-6 players; TCP/IP: 2-6 players; Maximum Players: 6; Free Internet Service: *www.mplayer.com*

This new entry from Mindscape lies halfway between the rigors of *Longbow II* and the action-oriented style of *Comanche*.

All simulation modeling has an agenda. Sometimes the goal is to demonstrate the physical rigors an aircraft endures, sometimes the emphasis falls to the avionics and instrumentation, and many times it's somewhere in between. When it comes to helicopter simulations, we've seen it approached from a couple of different perspectives. *Apache*, for instance, doesn't replicate avionics with the highest degree of fidelity, but it does give a sense of the "workload" a line pilot has to deal with in flying, reading the situation, and delivering weapons. *Longbow* is very different, with a hard focus on proper use of sensors to read the battlefield.

Team Apache takes a wholly different approach. The flight model falls at the high mid-range of the realism scale, while the avionics modeling is in the lower mid-range, however neither is the real focal point of this military simulation. As the name suggests, the focus falls on the tactics and command element of an attack helicopter squadron. The burden has been shifted from keeping the Apache airborne and the sensors on the right settings to assessing, planning for, and dealing with a combat situation. At this level, it succeeds admirably, though not without a few stumbles along the way.

An external drop camera lets you get a good view on the action, but the controls are a little cumbersome.

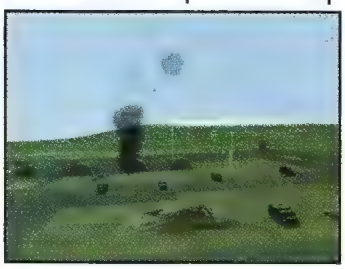
Though the box makes some half-hearted claims of hardcore realism, that realism is not to be found in the cockpit. Flight effects are good and approximate the feel and dynamics of helicopter flight, but they are a bit too forgiving. Hovering is absurd. It's as though a magical hidden pedestal rises out of the ground to support your helicopter each time you go into hover mode. The interrelationships of cyclic, collective, and rudder are simply too forgiving. On the positive side, gamers who spent a week learning how to finesse the controls of *Longbow* will welcome the smaller learning curve.

The "soft" modeling continues with avionics, which can best be described as curious. You have no true control over emissions, and if there is a way to turn radar and jammers on or off, I couldn't find it. This lack of detail in the sensors department is a good thing since the cockpit choices are somewhat lacking. There are three modes, each with their own quirks. The clear cockpit view doesn't have any sensor overlays. The rendered cockpit lacks a full range of views. The virtual cockpit is too fuzzy to read the instruments well and the canopy reflections, while realistic, obscure the view sometimes. To cap it

three degrees of obfuscation

COCKPITS ARE NOT *TEAM APACHE*'S STRONG SUIT. EACH HAS A DIFFERENT QUIRK THAT RENDERS IT LESS THAN USEFUL FOR COMBAT.

clear cockpit



YEAS

Provides the least obscure view of those impressive graphics.

NAYS

No sensor overlays.

rendered cockpit

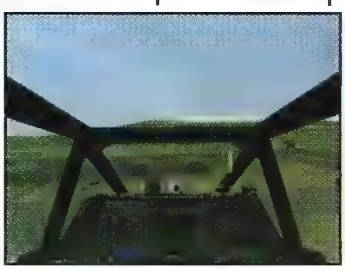
YEAS

Good wide view. Clear instruments all displayed in view.

NAYS

Lacks full range of side views.

virtual cockpit



YEAS

Quick, smooth scrolling emulates head's full range of motion.

NAYS

Instruments are too fuzzy to really use. Shimmering effect of light is tough on the eyes. Obscured view.

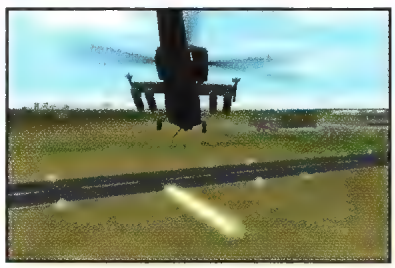
A wide array of crash types and effects make hitting the sod a little more bearable.

all off, there is no padlock view.

Aside from the iffy cockpits, the visuals of *Team Apache* are its strong point. Both hardware and software rendering modes are available, but the software-only graphics are fairly average. With a 3D card, however, Team Apache provides some superb frame rates and effective visuals, even on a mid-range system like a Pentium 200. Object modeling and textures are generally strong, though terrain, while nice looking, tends to be rather repetitive. Both locations, Latvia and Columbia, look pretty similar. This rolling verdure is spiced up considerably by trees, which can actually be semi-useful for concealment.

Where *Team Apache* really excels in its quasi-roleplaying command element. Don't mistake this for theater-wide command, like *Longbow II*: the missions are disappointingly hard-wired and the campaign scripted. The focus is on your role as team leader. This means you choose and manage pilot/gunner crews based upon their dossiers. These crews need to have complimentary skills, which improve with experience and success. Unfortunately, there are no number-based ratings for crew, so reading each dossier is essential to personnel management. If a crew member is scared, belligerent, slacking off, or not performing, you can choose to "have a talk" with him in the crew quarters, selecting between a "soft" or "hard" approach to improve his morale and performance.

Light resource management is also a part of *Team Apache*. Replacement supplies for damaged equipment and new munitions must be managed, and even maintenance crews can be manually assigned to specific tasks or given a break to improve performance. This relationship of rest to performance is also important in helicopter crews to an unnerving degree. Half your team must always be resting, and over-worked teams are hopeless. Inexperienced teams are also fairly useless. Until they earn their chops, they'll be lucky to hit air if



The terrain graphics and textures are nice-looking, but the ground is flat in many regions.

A little helicopter dogfight. The Russian Mi28 is one of the few foes who can take on an Apache. It'll most likely lose the fight, but at least it has a chance.

Teamwork is the key to success; too bad your pilots are utter idiots when they start out.

they fire. Even then, crew AI can be a bit iffy, with gunners failing to properly target and wingmen disobeying or ignoring orders. This does lessen with crew experience, but it makes for some frustrating early missions. The same weak routines were also apparently used in the single mission mode (where crew experience issues have no place), making some quick missions a little tough.

To create a true command experience, *Team Apache* adapts some conventions that take a little getting used to. Target acquisition is given to the gunner, leaving you to merely point the helicopter in the proper direction and pull the trigger. A special "sighting" routine has also been included to increase the sense of realism. This places a strong emphasis on eyeballing the situation, to the degree that if you're not pointed at a bogey, you might not spot him initially. Similarly, if you blow into an area at top speed, enemy units simply may not appear until it's too late, while if you come in slowly, you stand a better chance of spotting them.

As expected with this emphasis on leadership, a wide range of wingman commands is provided. Sometimes they obey, sometimes they don't. Overall, AI varies, with enemies tending to charge right in rather than work together. Mission structure is always interesting, with a good mix of rescue, escort, search and destroy, SEAD, and other duties.

Though the lack of dynamically generated missions is a disappointment, it does allow the developers to craft very interesting and often complex missions with multiple levels and variable tactical approaches. The result is a trade-off between limited replayability and diversity of missions from scenario to scenario. A decent mission editor and quick custom-defined missions also help, as does stable co-op and combative multi-player support. Tutorials walk you through all the basics with a really annoying narrator, but you must complete one to progress to the next: a rather silly feature.

Team Apache is a different kind of sim. It's always interesting, and its unique approach provides a subtly different perspective on the increasingly crowded helicopter combat sim genre. In terms of realism of modeling, it falls at the halfway point between sims like *U.S. Navy Fighters* and *Longbow II*, offering a realistic general feel but some unrealistic particulars. What it captures specifically, however, are the dynamics and challenges of creating and commanding and team of attack helicopters in a battlezone. The learning curve isn't too steep, enabling relatively inexperienced simmers to pick it up and start rocking quickly, while the management element gives the more experienced virtual pilot a lot to sink his teeth into.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

80%

PROS: Unique flight command element; relaxed flight model. High frame rates; strong visuals.

CONS: Targeting and sighting is a bit odd. Cockpits take some getting used to.

BOTTOM LINE: Lots of fun; emphasizes human dynamics over twitching and hand-eye skill.

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Cyberstorm 2: Corporate W

Category: Strategy

Developer: Dynamix

Publisher: Sierra, (800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 24MB RAM; Video card with 1MB local bus; 40MB hard-drive space	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; 32MB RAM; 55MB hard-drive space for typical installation

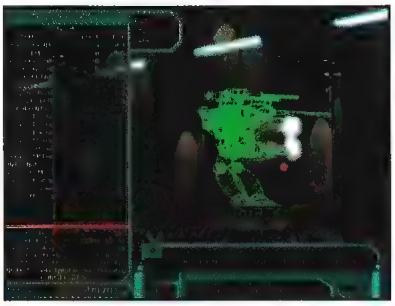
Multi-player: Serial/Null Modem; Modem (14.4); IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 8; Free Internet Service: *www.won.net*

It's been a long time since a game came this close to greatness, yet still managed to shoot itself in the foot.

I installed this game with no preconceptions — I hadn't played *MissionForce: Cyberstorm* and furthermore didn't have an inkling what to expect from the sequel. On the one hand, this freed me from any prejudices based on experience with the original game, but on the other, it left me unable to answer a question that's very critical to a lot of readers: How does it stack up?

So I decided to play *Cyberstorm 2* for a couple of weeks and then test the waters with a copy of the first game, allowing me to get a feel for the new, before savoring the old. While I have to say I found both enjoyable, the difference between the two is staggering.

Some games, you slip into as easily as a pair of favorite old shoes; others present you with an impenetrable wall of fortifications (read: poor manual and little or nothing in the way of a tutorial). I struggled with this game as one would with the mythological Hydra: just as I thought I understood one element, I ran into utter mystification with regard to another. I kid you not, friends, it took *three* days of mucking about before it all suddenly crystallized. But after that breakthrough, I began to enjoy the game more and more.



With twenty-seven types of chassis and 600 types of equipment building any kind of unit your heart desires is a balancing act.

The premise starts where *MissionForce: Cyberstorm* left off. Humankind has conquered the Cybrids (and one corporation has actually started to employ them!). A big ol' "jumpgate" is discovered, opening up the resource-rich Typhoeus system for economic and military exploitation. Eight powerful corporations (each, of course, with its strengths and weaknesses) immediately rush in, each hoping to become sole master of this valuable system.

At the beginning of the game, the player enlists in the company of his choice. Some offer better wages; some have advanced research; some promise quick promotion. Your career plays out differently — sometimes dramatically so — depending on which corporation you sign up with.

Next, you select the planet where you want to locate your Herc base. Some are resource-rich but have nasty environments; some are more Earth-like; one is rumored to contain potent artifacts from a long-dead alien civilization. No matter which planet you select as your home base, you can execute missions on all of them.

You start off with a limited budget (augmented by the discovery of resource deposits and useful artifacts), a couple of run-of-the-mill Hercs, and a Bioderm facility where you grow the genetically engineered pilots who'll control your units. Each bioderm is rated as to stability, command potential, discipline, life-span, and potential expertise with the game's numerous weapons' systems. Right away, you can engineer your 'derms to their maximum value, but that's a quick route to early bankruptcy

You must also, of course, budget for research, so you can develop bigger weapons, better armor, improved power plants — the usual. You can set a global budget (i.e., the same amount of money evenly spread in all categories), or you can set priorities manually (but don't forget to re-set them every few turns or research halts when the initial sum runs out).

'Derms increase in value as they successfully complete missions; if you prefer, however, you can simply recycle them and buy new, improved ones as your treasury increases. Their qualities really do have pronounced effects in the game: 'derms with low stability ratings, for instance, may suddenly run amok on the battlefield and refuse to follow orders. 'Derms who are showing signs of fatigue and diminished fighting ability can be temporarily boosted with injections that give them a quick amphetamine-like rush, but repeated doses can turn them psychotic. Use this drug sparingly, or not at all.

Micro-management junkies will have

WEAPONS GALORE

REMORA: Designed as a fast-strike/fast-withdraw Herc, it's light and maneuverable. It packs an EMP gun (Electromagnetic Pulse) that is very effective against shields, and a plasma gun that causes damage when the target's shields are weakened.

SENSEI: Good choice for recon missions; covers ground quickly and is armed with a moderately effective suite of weapons.

DEMON: An older, but reliable model, the Demon was the first true heavy Herc. Armament includes close-range Jihad bombs, and it's armored strongly enough to stand a fair chance of getting close enough to use them.

TROLL: Ideally suited for shield-shredding; best used in conjunction with another Herc that can finish off a shieldless target.

APOCALYPSE: The deadliest assault Herc, it mounts a 180mm gun, along with EMP and plasma weapons. A formidable customer.

VIPER: A speedy little tank that can shoot-and-scoot, using two EMP guns and a pair of medium-strength missiles.

DEVASTATOR: A great hulking brute of a tank; few enemies can survive a close encounter. Unfortunately, it's one of the slowest vehicles in the game.

METEOR: This anti-grav scout packs amplified sensors and can reconnoiter a whole battlefield in moments. Its light armament, however, makes it a sitting duck in an encounter with an enemy aircraft.

RAZORCLAW: This anti-grav unit trades firepower for weak shields; you can shred lots of enemy units with it, but probably only once.

ars

their hands full. Available weapons include 27 Herc, tank, and anti-grav chassis, which can be fitted-out with approximately 600 guns, missiles, sensors, shields, power plants, and salvage bins. A great part of the game's strategy, in fact, revolves around finding just the right combination of speed, range, penetrating power, and protection to complete a given mission.

You must also match the best available bioderm with a suitable unit. If you're going on a mission that seems to require units equipped with Electronic Flux Weapons, there's nothing to be gained by assigning 'derms who have high ratings in ballistic and missile weapons. Matching the right pilot with the right unit is challenging (and dreadfully dull, if you're not in the mood for it), so the game thoughtfully includes an "auto-link" command — the computer weighs all the variables and makes a "best guess" assignment.

Progress is made by successfully completing missions. If you only want to consolidate your base defenses and build up your funds, just opt for "Garrison" (the equivalent of "pass" in other games). Other options: patrols, exploration, mining expeditions, and hostile operations against the mines or bases of rival corporations.

(And don't neglect to upgrade your base defenses as rapidly as money permits; it's also a good idea to leave a unit or two in reserve, just in case of an enemy attack.)

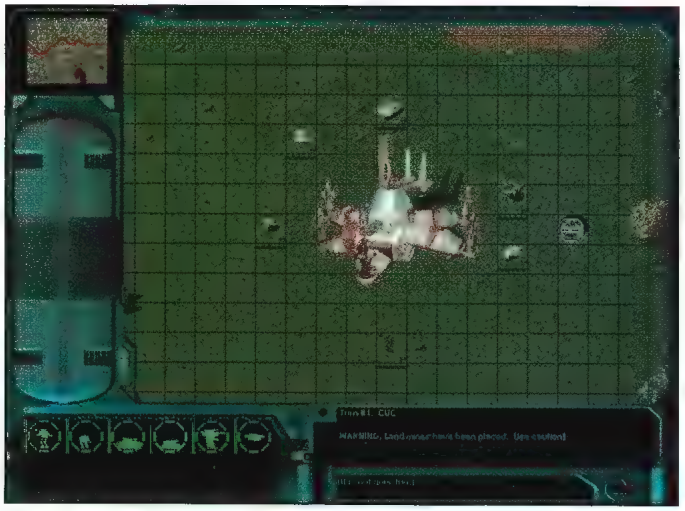
"Special Missions" usually involve great risk/great reward; fortunately, these are optional. You can win the campaign without taking on any of them, but they do add a lot of extra drama, and success can bring you new technology, new mines, and valuable salvage.

Combat takes place in a variety of environments (some of which have interesting effects on certain types of weapons), and looks pretty much like combat in any other game of this genre, although the terrain is tile-based, rather than hexagonal as it was in the original.

The immense number of possible variations — weaponry, chassis, sensors, 'derm abilities, etc. — makes for some interesting tactical possibilities. If you're low on funds, for instance, and you're about to attack a stronger enemy, you can sell your heavy stuff, buy light, cheap, extremely fast scout units, and equip them with "Jihad" bombs. Since these have a range of only one tile, you're essentially creating kamikaze units, for pocket-change, which can rush up next to a mighty Herc and blow up a unit that might be worth a quarter-million credits to your enemy.

After two weeks of immersion in *Cyberstorm 2*, I loaded the first game, and quickly saw why this sequel has turned off so many fans of that cult classic. *MissionForce Cyberstorm* was strictly turned-based, and featured sharp, hex-grid terrain; the bioderms had personalities (they're just disposable entities in the sequel), the animation was lively and the interface was a paradigm of logic and sleek efficiency. It also had, for lack of a better term, an engaging quality of *elan*.

The HERC base is where you make all of your command and production decisions.



Units deployed to defend a mine — the graphics were better in the first game, alas.

My time with the original furthered my belief that the decision to make a real-time option in *Cyberstorm 2* was a mistake; the game is simply too complex and unwieldy for that format. The graphics are grainier and more boring, there is no interaction with rival corporations, and the manual is an utter disgrace. Too often written in a smug, aren't-we-cool-dudes, tone, it is printed on dark gray mottled paper, using a twitchy, itty-bitty typeface. Whoever is responsible for this design should be blinded with red-hot pokers and turned loose in the Gobi Desert.

To be sure, *Cyberstorm 2* has plenty of depth and detail, and once I got the hang of it, I enjoyed the campaign and discovered a number of clever features. Had it been a strictly turn-based enhancement of the original (more units, a diplomacy mode, neat new technology, etc.), it would stand tall. But Dynamix obviously wanted to sell more copies of this than of the original and threw in all manner of complications and real-time-dictated compromises. Too often, these bleed over into the turn-based mode, so that what we have is neither fish, nor fowl, nor good red herring.

There's a lot of good, solid, gameplay here; unfortunately, there's also a lot of frustration and pointless difficulty (not to mention that lousy manual.) This has all the signs of a game designed by a committee. If the creative people had been left alone to do their thing, this could have been one hell of a strategy game. Too bad Dynamix didn't do just that.

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

62%

PROS: Tons of design elements; great mission variety; interesting tactical possibilities.

CONS: Real-time straitjacket all but ruins the good stuff; the manual is, literally, unreadable.

BOTTOM LINE: This had the potential for greatness, but the real-time virus brings it to its knees.

I HAVE AN ENORMOUS TANK BATTALION.
I HAVE AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS AT MY FINGERTIPS.
I'VE DESTROYED BUILDINGS IN MY WAY.
SO WHY
I AM ONE WITH THE CROSSHAIRS.
I AM A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

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I'VE DRIVEN MY VEHICLES LIKE A MANIAC.
AM I DEAD?
I HAVE THE FIERCE AIR FORCE.
I TORCHED A TAERKAST BIPLANE.
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Extreme Tactics

Category: Real-time Strategy

Developer: Media Station

Publisher: Piranha Interactive Publishing, (602) 491-0500
www.piranhainteractive.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-Speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90 (Pentium 120 for multi-player); 16MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space; Supported sound card	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 32MB RAM

Multi-player: TCP/IP; Maximum players: 4

Don't get reeled in by this game's attempt to stand out from the herd — it's just another real-time game, and a mediocre one at that.

If you've been a gamer for more than a few weeks, you're painfully aware of the real-time strategy genre. You may also feel, like most gamers, that it's in desperate need of a major dose of originality. Let's face it: the current RTS model has been done to death.

While the designers of *Extreme Tactics* attempt to wring a few new tricks out of the genre, unfortunately, it is a mere a baby-step up from the vast, hapless flock of sub-standard *Command & Conquer* clones.

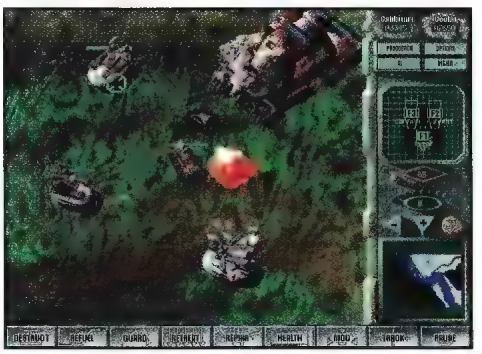
The background story, plucked directly from the Mechwarrior games, involves two rival clans (named after animals of prey) each bent on eradicating the other. You can play as either the Hammerhawk clan or the Bloodfox clan. Whatever. Each of the two linear, single-player campaigns is exactly eleven missions long and dotted with silly, pre-rendered cut scenes in which bad voice actors bark briefings at you.

The interface is standard RTS fare. You manipulate units on the battlefield, while unit building and management of the game's two token resources takes place through a schizophrenic version of *C&C*'s side panel that forces you to toggle between 'production' and 'battle' versions to perform all the necessary management tasks.

There are a few factors which set *Extreme Tactics* apart from other *C&C* clones. You don't have an established base; your unit production takes place from a mobile production center. The only other semi-stationary units are relays, which are required for some of the advanced gadgetry you add to your vehicles.

Which brings us to *Extreme Tactics*' major twist: you design your own war machines. Units consist of a basic chassis, a drive mechanism that determines the unit's speed and terrain crossing capability, and various attachments such as armaments, shielding, and detection equipment. For a while, this seems to add to the strategy in the game; each clan has a handful of unique gear to choose from. Unfortunately, the options are quite limited: there are only five chassis and drives per side, three shields and three each of detection and stealth gadgets. To make matters worse, after a few minutes of experimentation, you'll come to realize that the clans' unique equipment isn't really that unique; in fact it's so closely paralleled that the differences are merely in name and graphical effects. The "strategy" suddenly starts to resemble a complex version of rock-paper-scissors: Your enemy uses one type of shielding, you build units with weapons that thwart it. Your enemy adjusts, you adjust. After the dust settles, the only benefit of the design interface is that it effectively eliminates the need for 'unit trees.'

Here, in the unit design interface, is where you'll experience the most fun you'll have in this game. Unfortunately, that still isn't much.

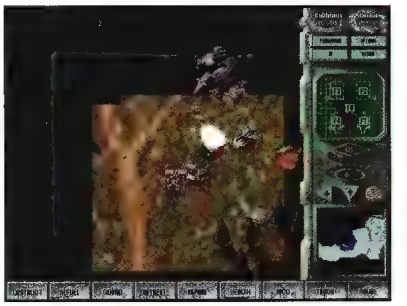


A zoom-in viewing mode shows your units in greater detail, but you can't see enough of the battlefield to lead them effectively into battle.

While you can assign artificial intelligence to your vehicles, it pales in comparison to *Dark Reign*; you decide factors like how units react to attacks and how much damage to put up with before going to get repaired, but there's no option to set paths and waypoints or patrol routs.

Once the novelty of unit design wears off — trust me, it happens quickly — *Extreme Tactics* can be filtered down to little more than a "tank rush" RTS game — whoever builds the most powerful units fastest wins. There's just not enough here to set *Extreme Tactics* apart in a genre overpopulated by uninspired clones.

—Joel Durham



It's hard to tell that I custom built those little tank guys, but I can assure you that they are 100 percent original creations.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

47%

HIGHS: Designing units is sort of fun; no convoluted unit trees.

LOWS: Once the novelty wears off, this game is very simplistic and repetitive.

BOTTOM LINE: With so many RTS games out there, this does little to distinguish itself.

I DEPLOYED MY GUYS USING THE TRANSPARENT MAP.

I TOLD MY GUYS TO ATTACK FROM BOTH FLANKS.

I KNOW WHERE THE TECH UPGRADE SECTOR IS.

I KNOW WHERE TO PLACE MY HOST STATION.

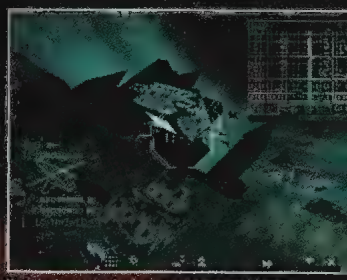
I KNOW WHERE THE POWER STATIONS ARE.

SO WHY AM I STILL DEAD?

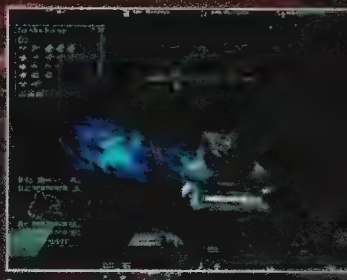
I SAW A MYKONIAN CUBOID FORMATION.

I'M BEING SMART ABOUT MY MOVES.

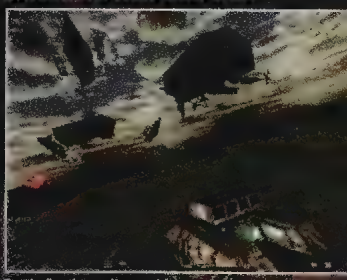
I KNOW WHICH SECTORS ARE SECURE.



Use your map to deploy your troops and jump into any of 15 different types of vehicles.



Create your squadrons and set their level of aggressiveness to defend, attack, or raid.



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Deathtrap Dungeon

Category: Action

Developer: Asylum Studios

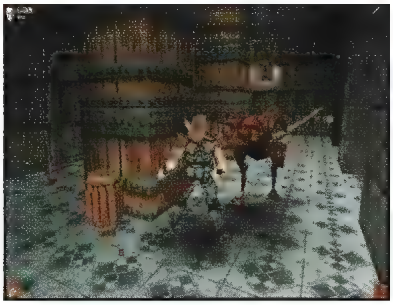
Publisher: Eidos Interactive, (800) 617-8737
www.eidosinteractive.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; DirectX-compatible sound card; Mouse	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium II; 32MB RAM; Direct3D-compatible accelerator card; Gamepad/joystick optional

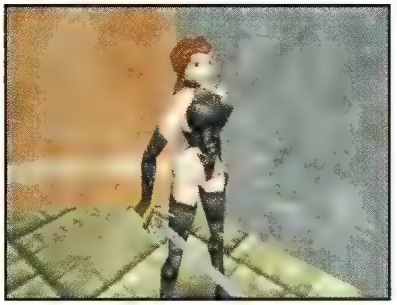
Multi-player: IPX; Maximum Players: 4

If you can get past a few annoying shortcomings, Eidos' latest is a fun dungeon romp with chills, spills, and thrills.

Combine the look and gameplay of *Tomb Raider* with *Die by the Sword*, and dump them into the eerie world of Ian Livingstone's *Fighting Fantasy* books and, voila! *Deathtrap Dungeon*. Overseen by Livingstone himself, this hack n' slash action/adventure hybrid from Eidos is based on the successful roleplaying gamebook series of the same name. If you haven't indulged in any of these "choose your own adventures" from the mid-1980s, the premise behind the game is as follows: Fang was once a peaceful town until it was enslaved by a powerful and malevolent beast, Melkor the Dragon. He tormented the residents, stole their riches, and forced them to build a trap-filled lair in the hillside as his new home. For additional protection, Melkor summoned a motley collection of creatures to inhabit the dungeon. Baron Sukumvit, a tyrant who once ruled these lands, challenged the townsfolk of Fang to enter the deadly labyrinth and slay Melkor. Whoever dared to accept and succeed in "The Walk" will free the town from Melkor's reign and walk away with a purse of 10,000 gold pieces. After a number of failed and fatal attempts, it's now your turn to navigate through the treacherous bowels of this dungeon, slaughter the dragon, and get out alive to relish in the riches. And so the adventure begins...



The best way to rid these massive rats is with the venomous sword... if you can find it. Also, use the pillars in the center of the room to sneak up on the rodents.



Okay, so she doesn't look like she's protected enough for battle, but neither did Lara.

Gamers choose either a male or female character, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. The female — Red Lotus — is a big-busted Lara Croft-inspired heroine, who is fast, dexterous, and can jump far with those long legs of hers. The male character — Chaindog — on the other hand, is slower but substantially tougher male warrior, who can take more of a wallop before kissing the pavement. Be forewarned — Red Lotus is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the various types of curvy, scantily clad females in this game, so don't even think about playing *Deathtrap Dungeon* if this sort of thing offends you.

As with *Tomb Raider*, *Deathtrap Dungeon* uses a third-person perspective that follows the character with an intelligent camera. This works for the most part, since you need to analyze a room or hallway carefully to avoid traps and keep an eye on the slew of creatures charging at you from all sides. The downfall to this view, however, is when the auto-camera (used for cinematic effect, no doubt) chooses an uncompromising angle for the situation. For instance, it's often necessary to run and jump over a bottomless chasm, but the camera will shift just before the edge and throw off your timing. And just as in *Alone in the Dark* or *Tomb Raider*, there are problems in combat as well, as your character becomes obscured behind other objects or characters.

The keyboard proves to be a fairly intuitive control method and uses a similar layout as most action/adventure games. It feels comfortable but it can be hard to move and fight at the same time — a technique that takes some time to master. Fortunately all of the keys can be re-mapped if so desired. Personally, I

Don't stop to chat for too long... these hissing snake babes will whack you across the room if you don't keep on your toes. You'll encounter several odd characters on your travels.

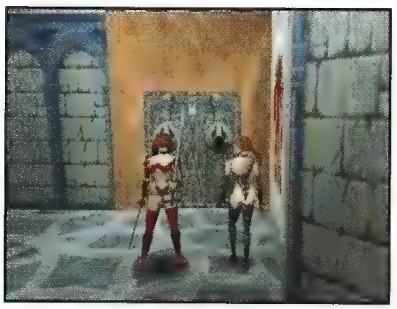
F4 brings up the spell menu in the lower portion of the screen. I wouldn't recommend using a melee weapon with 'ol T-Rex.

chose to change the spell key since it's very easy to accidentally hit the run key beside it, thus wasting a valuable spell. One clever addition to the spell menu includes small white arrows the gamer can lay out on the floor of the dungeon to mark where they've been.

Of course, *Deathtrap Dungeon* features some cunning environmental puzzles laced with fake floors, hidden arrow-throwing contraptions, and other dangerous obstacles — but the *real* danger is the armed combat against these ridiculously imaginative monsters. To keep things fresh, each of the ten levels serves up a unique theme. Examples include a circus level housing an assortment of deadly clowns, jesters and imps (often hopping around in giant boots that crush you), the quarry level features huge Rockmen that can only be destroyed by using a Magic Warhammer, while another level consists of a variety of butchering babes. In total, there are more than 55 kinds of creatures: Minotaurs, a T-Rex, giant rats and spiders, scorpions, skeletons, and orcs, to name a few. Fans of gratuitous violence will be pleased to know there's plenty of decapitation, with limbs flying around and excessive blood that literally drips from the ceiling.

To aid in the carnage, there's a medley of melee weapons such as swords and Warhammers, but keep in mind most will break after a dozen encounters or so. There're also projectile toys such as bombs, grenades, missile launchers, flame throwers and a neat gun called a "Blunderbuss" — a shotgun-like firearm manufactured to spit out nails and lead. But use them sparingly — ammo is as difficult to find as the weapons themselves.

A standard array of spells is available (fire, lightning and energy), with a few unusual and gratifying nasties: "Razorspell" will spatter razor blades,



It's a Battle of the Breasts — Red Lotus sizes up one of her many enemies.

There are 55 unique enemies to slice through. These undead circus fools will taunt and tease, but they're easy to take down, especially if your wielding this kind of sword.

"Jetspell" fires an avalanche of rocks, and an exploding "War Pig of Doom" can be tossed to chase down an enemy. Power-ups can serve as health points, antidotes to poison, temporary invisibility or invulnerability, speed, shields, and so forth.

Deathtrap Dungeon deserves top marks for its visuals. The architecture is clean and nicely textured, and despite the fact you're supposed to be in a dark and dingy castle, the rooms and corridors are brightly lit and detailed without sacrificing the macabre effect. Especially when hardware accelerated (both Direct 3D and Glide support), the colored lighting and explosions are gorgeous. Annoyingly, though, the settings menu says the resolution can be cranked up to 800x600, but it's only capable of reaching 640x480. Just before the game went to press, the higher resolution was taken out due to incompatibilities with some video cards during last-minute testing. However, with an accelerator card on a slightly better than specified system, the animation is fast and fluid, regardless of the number of baddies on screen at the same time.

With the exception of the auto-camera disturbance, it sounds like *Deathtrap Dungeon* may be a grand-slam home run, right? Well, unfortunately there are other problems that are harder to forgive. As with its half-sister *Tomb Raider*, *Deathtrap Dungeon* suffers from frequent clipping problems, and at times, on a much greater scale. It's not unusual to walk right through a crate or barrel you're supposed to jump onto. Even worse, often I'd start to enter a room and get hacked from the other side without even opening the door yet! Secondly, and more importantly, is the lack of a logical save-game scheme. Due to the acursed "save point" system found in many console games, players cannot save the game unless there's a floating white skull around, while floating red skulls will cost five gold coins to use! Developers are going to have to learn that PC gamers will get frustrated when forced to repeat

The most annoying handicap in *Deathtrap Dungeon* is the save-point system. Players can only save the game at these illuminated skulls.

the same area time and time again and will simply give up and play something else instead. Third, the enemy artificial intelligence isn't anything to write home about and the only current multi-player support for *Deathtrap Dungeon* is on a LAN with up to three other players. Since the majority of players don't have access to a local area network for gaming, the five bonus DeathMatch maps are pretty much useless for most of us. Eidos claims, however, that it is working on providing Internet support via Mplayer.

Sure, there are several flaws with *Deathtrap Dungeon*, but in the final analysis the positives outweigh the negatives. If you're itching for a gory action game with stellar graphics and smart level design, you could do worse.

— Marc Saltzman

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Inspiring visuals, level design; good atmosphere; many enemies.

79%

LOWS: Crap save game feature; auto-camera interferes with gameplay; "clipping" problems; lack of Internet play.

BOTTOM LINE: This is challenging and enjoyable, but it falls short of greatness.

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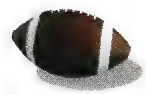
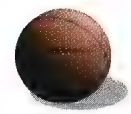
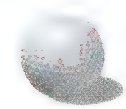


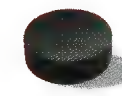
fantasy football



fantasy basketball



fantasy golf



fantasy hockey

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TOCA Championship Racing

Category: Simulation

Developer: Codemasters

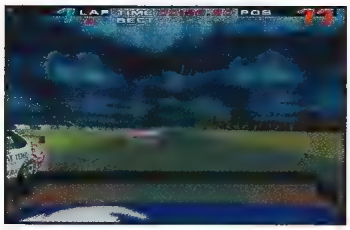
Publisher: The 3DO Company, (415) 261-3454
www.3do.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133 (with Direct 3D accelerator); Pentium 166 software rendering only; 16MB RAM; 30MB HD space	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; Direct3D accelerator; Gamepad or steering wheel

Multi-player: IPX; TCP/IP Internet (28.8K+); Maximum players: 8 via LAN or Internet, 4 player split-screen; Spawnable: Yes

This British touring car championship sim mixes authenticity with playability.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE



Use your rear-view mirror to see if any competitors are having trouble with the slick roads.

A lot of racing games feature cars that most people will never get the chance to drive in real life — it's probably a good thing too, judging by the driving "skills" displayed by some of the morons on our nation's highways. *TOCA Championship Racing*, however, puts you behind the wheel of more familiar vehicles, such as Hondas, Volvos, Nissans, and Fords. Naturally, they're quite a bit beefier under the hood than the average family sedan, but as per the rules of the league, they must look just like the production models out on the roads, and therein lies some of the appeal of the game.

TOCA has some of the most enjoyable, fender-bending road battles you're likely to encounter in PC racing. This has a lot to do with the cars; the rules require certain restrictions and requirements such as engine size and power, a lack of turbo or super chargers, and each vehicle must use the body shell used in the road car model. These rules allow driver skills to play a larger part in the outcomes, rather than who is better at fiddling around with shock settings and gear ratios, and it tends to keep things a lot closer than in most games.

Four players on the same computer...more racing games should give you this option.

Each of the real-life teams (eight in all) and drivers are represented, and all the vehicles and drivers have their own characteristics. The physics model of the cars feels very realistic, and they react as you would expect them to, spinning out if you try and take a turn too fast or if your tires catch the grass. Each of the cars have subtle differences in their handling, such as when the brakes will lock, turning radii, and acceleration. The drivers too, are their own men. Some are very aggressive, not hesitating to send you sideways when you clash with them in a turn. Others will be more cautious, allowing you to pass rather than risking a race-destroying tussle. You need to learn your fellow competitors' habits, and after a few races, you'll start to develop a real feeling of animosity towards a few of them.

For the most part, the graphics in *TOCA* are excellent, especially (everyone repeat after me) with a 3D accelerator. In software things still look good, but you'll need more horsepower to get the frame rate smooth and silky. In a cool touch, the cars show signs of damage like windshields shattering, fenders crumbling, and hoods flying off when you make contact with other vehicles or roadside objects. One of my complaints, though, is that no matter how beat up the car gets, the handling never seems to suffer. The tracks are fun to race on, but the pop-in of the background graphics made things appear a bit sloppy. However, the weather effects look convincing, and you'll really feel the effects of the poor conditions as you try and hold the road through the turns.

Your car will deform and your windshields will smash when you get involved in a collision.

Multi-player is well implemented with support for as many as eight players via a LAN or over the Internet. Modem and serial connections are an option too. A feature lacking in many PC games is a split-screen mode, and *TOCA* delivers big time here, with as many as four players able to race on the same screen. The frame rate takes a hit obviously, but even on a P200, the game was totally playable with four players at once. The downside, of course, is the size of the viewing area. Even on a 19" monitor, some of the turns will sneak up on you unless you know the track intimately.

TOCA is a challenging game. The best thing to do is find a car you like and learn its tendencies. With a bit of practice, you'll be carving corners with the best of them and scoring enough points to advance through the championship. You had better get good too, because you won't be able to access the full selection of tracks in the single or multi-player games until you move on to a new track in the championship mode. But this annoyance is not enough to damage what is an excellent racer that should be experienced by anyone looking for more than just an arcade-like romp around the track.

—Rob Smolka

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: Realistic car handling; nice car graphics and weather effects.

LOWS: Restricted access to tracks; some graphic pop-in; damage has no effect on car performance.

BOTTOM LINE: If you stick with it and develop your skills, you'll find some great racing.

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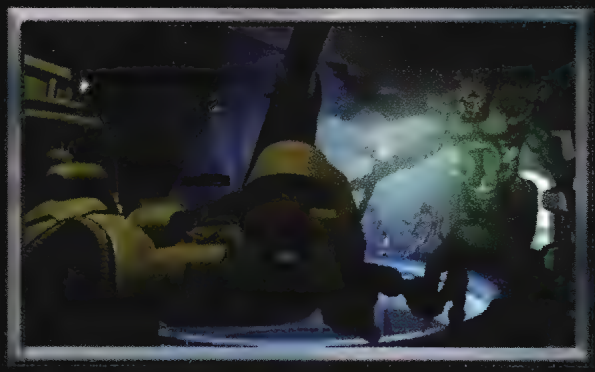
e in the search for life. Only one will survive.



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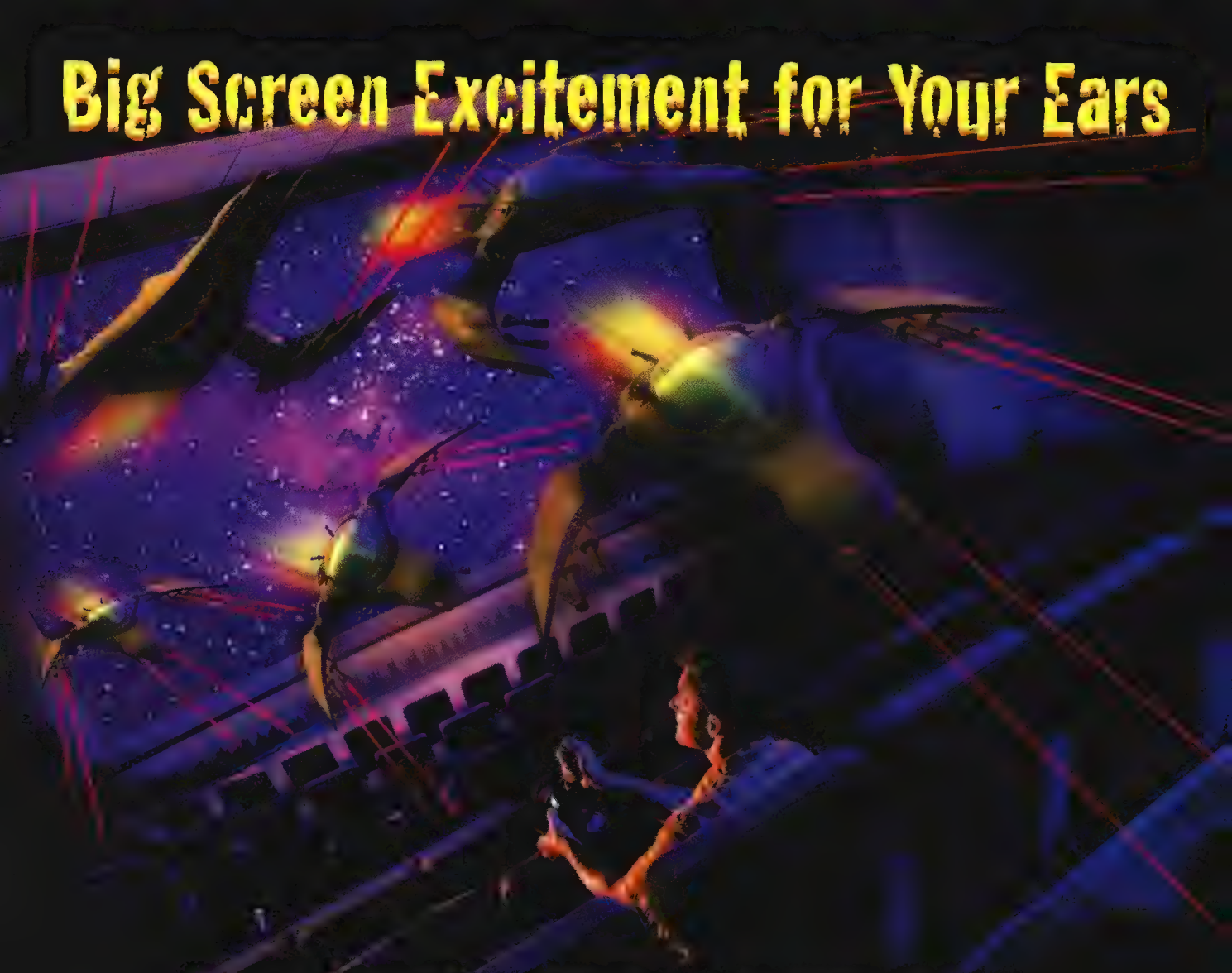

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The Hard Stuff

Ah, the summer has come and gone again. Warm weather, beaches, pool parties, broken air conditioners... kiss them all goodbye. Good riddance, we say — as much fun as those summertime shenanigans can be, by the time August rolls along we'd gladly trade 'em in for some new friggin' games!

What is it about the summer months that makes game companies shy away from releasing their products? Year after year, it's the same thing. When we were still in school, it frustrated us to no end that all the new games would begin shipping on the first day of the fall semester. Of course, that didn't stop us from buying them — but we'd have gotten better grades if we hadn't been forced to play so many new games in the first half of the term!

Maybe it's just us. Maybe we're the only people in the entire world who would purchase a game in the middle of summer (maybe we would even buy two or three games) — but we have a hard time believing that. All you guys out there must feel the same way, right? You want to be playing games all year 'round — not just during the months that game developers think are good for retail sales.

Fortunately, here at The Hard Stuff we never stop getting new gadgets. As proof of this, we've got all sorts of goodies coming to you this month. For starters, Matrox has finished its G200 integrated 2D/3D accelerator; not only should it be on the shelves by the time you read this, but we've got a full review of it. In addition, Microsoft has just sent us a finished SideWinder Freestyle Pro gamepad — the one with the accelerometer (that fancypants device that turns motion into control), and it's reviewed, too.

We're not just letting you in on all the new hardware this month, either. Windows 98 is here; we've been fiddling with it for a while, now, and we figured it was high time we filled you in on some of the new features that grace Big Brother's (er, Microsoft's) new operating system.

So...good times are here again for us dedicated gamers of the world. By the time you read this, any number of new and exciting games should be in trucks, on their way to your local software store. Match up some of that new software with some new hardware, and you've got the makings of a gloriously isolated, mouse-potato existence. Just the way we like it!

Contents

Previews

Windows 98 Arrives: *Microsoft's latest OS is nice, but it's not the leap Win95 was* 251

More Facets for Diamond: *New motherboards and wireless networking coming soon* . . 252

Sound Blaster Live! *Creative Labs banks on new sound technology* 253

Reviews

Pionex 640029 400MHz *system* . . . . .

Matrox Mystique G200 *card* . . . . .

ADS USB Hub *interface* . . . . .

Diamond Monster Sound MX200 PCI *card* . . 260

SideWinder Freestyle Pro *gamepad* 265

Best Data Arcade FXII *card* . . . . .

Hercules Terminator 2X/i *card* 266

Altec ADA305 USB Speakers *speakers* . . . . .

PCWorks FourPointSurround Speaker . . . . .

The Hard Stuff Sideways Page

Speakers: *We've got the full dish on all the speakers we've recently reviewed* 207

Tech Q&A

You're reaching out. *We're here to help.* 274

How We Rate The Hard Stuff

You've been around long enough to know the greatest technology doesn't mean a thing unless it improves the games you love to play. Our reviews focus on real-world testing, but when a number is in order for comparisons, we use the benchmarking tools developed by our hardware-frenzied sister publication, *boot*. Between our rigorous testing and the thorough bootMarks, we'll give you the lowdown on which devices perform and which ones fizzle.

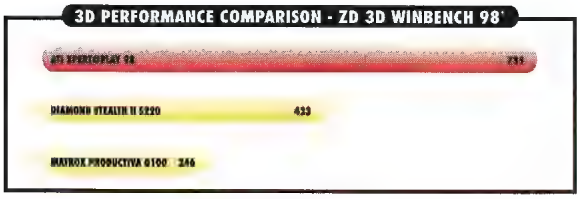
PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

Every month, we honor the best peripherals, utilities, and hardware we test with our Editors' Choice award. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on hardware at a local computer store, you can be sure it's among the best.

Lara looks better on a Flat

With ATI XPERT@Play 98.

- ATI XPERT@Play 98 is **the only Digital Flat Panel-ready graphics card** with in-your-face 3D, 2D, video and TV-out. You don't get that from 3Dfx Voodoo².
- Strap-on 8MB of power, 3D to the max, and DVD picture quality video playback from the #1 worldwide leader in graphics boards.
- All ATI XPERT graphics boards are available in either PCI or fully enabled AGP 2X versions. The AGP version includes a free Software DVD offer.
- Get TV on your PC with ATI-TV.
- For more information on ATI's Digital Flat Panel support check out **www.atitech.com**.



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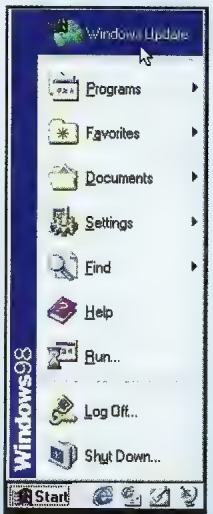
Windows 98 arrives

Microsoft's latest operating system incorporates some impressive features — but it's not the quantum leap Win 95 was.

It's been a long time in coming, but the newest version of Microsoft's operating system is finally fully upon us — but it's not destined to wreak the kind of industry-shaking changes that Win 95 brought.

When Windows 95 was released, there were any number of compelling reasons to upgrade — and many not to. Windows 95 made the PC considerably more accessible than it had been previously, but at the expense of higher system requirements. As a result, many hard-core gamers were hesitant to upgrade until it became clear that virtually every new PC game was going to be a Win 95-only product. This time around, it appears as if Microsoft was more content in the philosophy of evolution over revolution, and as such, Windows 98 is not the giant technological leap it was in its previous iteration; it shouldn't scare off gamers who fear change.



Windows Update, a handy new feature in Windows 98, allows users to keep their new OS current.

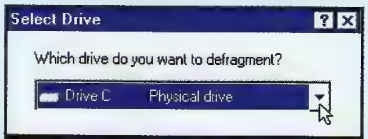
An important feature that was originally intended to be a defining characteristic of Windows 98 was its seamless web integration — a blurring of the lines between the Internet and your own computer. But with the release of Internet Explorer 4.0 and Active Desktop, this feature became commonplace in Win 95 long before Win 98 made the scene. So what else does this new operating system have to offer the discriminating gamer?

A key benefit is support for the Universal Serial Bus. Although the latest update for Win 95 included support for this long unused port, most manufacturers have held off releasing USB products, waiting instead for the arrival of Windows 98. While support for a new connector on the back of your computer might not sound exciting on its face, the reality of USB includes the ability to connect as many as 127 peripherals at a time — all of them hot-swappable (meaning you can connect or disconnect a USB peripheral while your machine is powered up, and it will automatically recognize the change without having to be rebooted). The possibilities are endless; speakers, gamepads, mice, keyboards, scanners, etc. — they'll all be easily hooked up via the same connector, and you'll no longer have to worry about configuring any of them, as your computer and Win 98 will now handle all the setup. True plug-and-play finally may have arrived in 1998 — and it's about time.

In addition to USB, IEEE 1394 (a.k.a. FireWire — a new high-speed interface designed to replace SCSI and IDE interfaces at some point in the future) and DVD support has been added, as well.

A truly new feature to Windows is support for the simultaneous operation of multiple graphics cards and monitors. It might be pretty expensive to take advantage of this feature, but the prospect of a game using it is pretty exciting. Imagine a racing game that gives you a panoramic view of the track on three monitors (just like some coin-op machines), or an air combat sim whose multi-function display really is a separate screen.

When the OSR2 update was released for Windows 95 more than a year ago, it came with a feature that let users with large hard drives save space by converting their disk format from the standard FAT16 to the newer and more efficient FAT32. Under the older 16-bit file allocation table (FAT), a 2GB hard drive would be made up of 32K clusters, and even if a file didn't use a full 32K, it would take up at least that much space. Using FAT32, clusters can now be as small as 4K; the result is considerably less wasted space on larger hard drives. To do this upgrade in Win 95, however, required the user to run the DOS partition utility, FDISK — kind of a scary proposition for less experienced folks. Windows 98 makes the process considerably easier with a built-in utility that handles the update. (As with any upgrade that involves your hard drive, it's a good idea to back up any important information before making this jump.)



Disk Defragmenter is new and improved for Windows 98 — allowing programs to load more quickly than they did under Win95.

Windows 98 also includes several updates that, while not readily apparent, are quite helpful just the same. The Disk Defragmenter has been updated, and now allows for considerably faster load times. A Windows Update feature lets Win 98 users automatically upgrade to the newest version via the Internet (it works similarly to Product Updates option under Internet Explorer 4.0's Help menu). Add to this numerous new reliability features that make recovering from crashes considerably easier, and you have the makings of an impressive update to the Windows 95 operating system.

But it's not likely that Windows 98 will be the must-have for gamers that Windows 95 became — not any time soon, anyway. If the new features sound useful to you, go ahead and upgrade. But if you'd rather take a wait-and-see approach, not having Win 98 shouldn't hamper your gameplaying in the least.

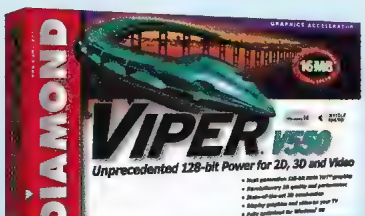
More Facets for Diamond

New products include motherboards, wireless networking

Diamond Multimedia, long a big name in video cards and 3D accelerators, continues to expand its product line into some unexpected new categories.

VIPER V550

Of course, Diamond has no plans of abandoning graphics accelerators. In fact, the company has announced additions to two of its more popular 3D graphics lines. The first, the Viper 550, continues Diamond's relationship with NVIDIA. Based on NVIDIA's new Riva TNT chip, the Viper 550 is set to sell in several flavors, including AGP 2X and PCI-based solutions with 8MB and 16MB of memory. Diamond says the first 550 to hit the shelves will be a 16MB AGP 2X card; it may be available as you read this.



The Riva TNT is NVIDIA's newest and best hope of taking some of the wind out of 3Dfx's sails. According to NVIDIA, the TNT will be at least as fast as a single Voodoo2 in most cases — and in many instances should surpass even dual Voodoo2 performance. Not content to merely match the power of Voodoo2, NVIDIA has seen fit to give the TNT new features like a 32-bit color pipeline (compared to 3Dfx's 16-bit) for considerably better image quality. With 16 Megs of SDRAM, resolutions in 3D should go as high as 1,600x1,200.

MONSTER FUSION

Diamond's very successful Monster line will soon include its first integrated 2D/3D card. Diamond decided to pass on 3Dfx's original integrated chipset, the Voodoo Rush, but the company has picked up 3Dfx's newest solution, the Voodoo Banshee. The new card, the Monster Fusion, will ship initially as a 16MB PCI card, although an AGP 1X version should be shipping shortly thereafter.

As we reported last month, the Voodoo Banshee chipset is built squarely on Voodoo2 technology and was developed entirely in-house at 3Dfx, so it should avoid some of the pitfalls that dragged Rush down. The Banshee's lack of the Voodoo2's second texture mapping unit will slow down games that take advantage of multitexturing. On the other hand, Diamond says the Monster Fusion will have the advantage of being able to render 3D games at 1,024x768 with a Z-buffer — a feature that would ordinarily require two Monster 3D IIs set up in SLI mode. Look out for the Monster Fusion to ship around the time that you're reading this.

DIAMOND & MICRONICS

In an interesting turn, Diamond Multimedia recently purchased Micronics Computers, Inc.— a company best known for both its Orchid line of video cards and its popular line of PC motherboards. As far as the Orchid line is concerned, there are no immediate plans to scrub the popular brand, especially in light of the fact that it remains successful throughout Europe. Diamond is still uncertain about releasing future products under the name, however.

As far as the motherboard end of the business is concerned, Diamond will continue with Micronics' current line of boards until it completes development of new ones. Diamond seems keen on entering into the two areas of the motherboard market that Intel does not have firm control over, i.e., the high-end and low-end segments. On the premium side, Diamond has stated its interest in making a true "tweaker's" board — one that might be easily overclocked, for example. On the low end, Diamond seems serious about going into the sub-$1,000 PC market with integrated boards that could conceivably include built-in Monster 3D accelerators.

HOMEFREE

Diamond is also apparently interested in the home networking market. The company recently announced a wireless networking solution it calls "HomeFree" that will allow home and/or small office PC users to link computers and share data via radio waves (much in the same way a cordless phone functions) that will send information through walls, floors, and ceilings at a range of up to 150 feet. Operating at a frequency of 2.4GHz (important only because nothing else in your home emits radio waves in that range) HomeFree should be able to transfer information as fast as 1 megabit per second — plenty fast enough for smooth multiplayer gaming over a network.

One of the nicer features that should be making its way to HomeFree is the inclusion of routing software that Diamond says will allow users to share Internet connections and services using only one phone line. For instance, you'll be able to look at the *PC Gamer* home page while someone else in the house is using another computer to search the web for naked pictures of Newt Gingrich. You'll be sharing the bandwidth, of course, but as faster Internet connectivity becomes standard in homes, that should become less of an issue.

There should be two retail versions of HomeFree shipping some time this fall. The first will be a pack that includes one PCI and one ISA card, for use in two computers. The second version will include one ISA card and one PC card (PCMCIA) for use in connecting a desktop system with a laptop.

CAN YOU SAY "PALM PIRATE"?

In the biggest departure from Diamond's otherwise computer-centric product line, the company is actually planning on releasing a digital, portable MP3 audio player. Currently unnamed, this new product will let users upload as much as two hours worth of MP3 encoded music into it, directly from their computers. (MP3 is an MPEG format for audio compression; it sounds nearly as good as CD audio, but takes up considerably less space and so has become a popular means of distributing music via the Internet.) While many people have voiced their desire to play MP3s away from the confines of their computer desks, this venture will mark the first time that it will actually be possible.

The unit, roughly the size of a Walkman or pager, will hold one hour of music (32 MB), and should be expandable by means of flash storage media (memory that does not lose its information once powered down or removed from the unit) to either an additional 1/2 hour (16 MB) or another full hour.

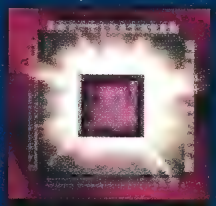
Naturally, Diamond says the new player is intended for use only with legally acquired MP3 files, but it'll have an advantage over portable CD and cassette players since its lack of moving parts means it won't skip or flutter when used during strenuous activity or exercise. Expect to see this gadget sometime in October.

Sound Blaster Live!

Creative banks on new sound technology

With Windows 95 and its DirectSound API nearly eliminating the need for a Sound Blaster-compatible sound card in your gaming PC, Creative Labs has found its virtual monopoly on audio solutions steadily eroding. More advanced sound cards from other manufacturers have taken a bite out of Creative's pie, forcing the company to learn to be competitive in a marketplace it has dominated for years.

Creative's first shot in the battle is a next-generation sound card dubbed Sound Blaster Live! At the heart of this new PCI card will be E-mu Systems' EMU10K1 audio processor chip, which Creative Labs calls the most powerful integrated hardware audio and effects engine available today.



Here's a shot of the EMU 10K1, the chip that will power Sound Blaster Live! And what a handsome looking processor it is, all lit up like that...

Bold claims, to be sure, and ones we've heard in the past — especially in the arena of 3D and positional audio. But Creative says the competition (principally Aureal's A3D standard) doesn't do enough to create "true" sound environments. A3D, in its current state, can only emulate the sensation of distance through the varying of volume levels, Creative says, and explained this deficiency by giving an example of a situation that could easily occur in a real game. According to Creative, a sound that was relatively quiet but very close to a listener's ears would be precieved to be at the same distance away as a loud sound that was farther away, and therefore, Creative postulates, volume levels alone aren't getting the job done. The Sound Blaster Live! and Environmental Audio™ by CREATIVE

Creative's new Environmental Audio technology, on the other hand, goes a step further, including reverb effects as a positional sound cue. Creative says this makes it much easier to define a sound's position in the game environment, since a listener can hear both the original sound as well as the reflected sound bouncing off of virtual surfaces.

Speaker support is another arena in which Creative believes it has an advantage. Aureal's A3D standard can support more than two speakers, but to date few, if any, Aureal-based sound cards include connections for more than two. The Sound Blaster Live! card, however, is designed to drive anywhere from two to eight speakers; in fact, Creative says it was designed with a minimum of four speakers in mind. The benefits of a pair of rear speakers should be apparent to anyone who's listened to a home theater setup with Dolby Surround or Dolby Digital sound; using more speakers to create positional sounds is always going to be more effective than simulating surround sound with two speakers, as turning around in your chair won't spoil the surround effect as it does when just using the two. Time will tell whether or not Creative efforts to revitalize the Sound Blaster line will keep it on top, but one thing's for sure — the renewed competition in the audio arena can only be a good thing for gamers.

WRONG!

Go back to Double A and learn some fundamentals! Even as your teammate crosses the plate, the third strike ends the game. If you're gonna play VR Baseball 2000 you gotta have game, your in the big leagues now.

FOR THE CORRECT ANSWER, GO TO PAGE 307

VR BASEBALL™ 2000
NEXT GENERATION BASEBALL

59 programmable functions. 2 directional pads—one for smooth, joystick-like control, one for mega-fast, mega-deadly digital action. Proportional flippers let you "feel" how hard or soft to hit, swing,

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turn or kick. The new Xterminator game controller. Be the first on your block to make your neighbors say, "What's that smell?" Check out www.morekills.com.

GRAVIS™

Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #254

Imagine this...

YOUR WIFE...

JUST OFFERED TO BUY YOU A NEW JOYSTICK — JUST BECAUSE SHE THINKS YOU'RE A SWELL GUY. SHE UNDERSTANDS THAT SOME THINGS ARE NOT WITHIN YOUR MORTAL POWER AND THAT SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO PLAY "JUST ONE MORE GAME."

IN TURN, YOU: (CHOOSE ONE)

A) OFFER TO SEE THE NEXT JANE AUSTEN MOVIE WITH HER.
B) TELL HER YOU'D LOVE TO TAKE HER SHOE SHOPPING THIS WEEKEND.
C) IMMEDIATELY GO ONLINE TO PC GAMER'S REQUEST-O-MATIC SITE TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ON THE FOREMOST JOYSTICK MANUFACTURERS.

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OBVIOUSLY,

YOUR CHOICE IS "C." SO KISS YOUR WIFE FOR BEING SO COOL, AND THEN CHECK OUT REQUEST-O-MATIC.

request-O-matic

www.pcgamer.com/request

Pionex 640029 400MHz

Company: Pionex
www.pionex.com

Phone: (800) 313-1995 (CUST. SERVICE)

Prices: $2,249 (AS REVIEWED, WITH MONITOR)

Pionex shoots for affordability — but can a 400MHz system get by without the aid of a fast graphics accelerator?

Pionex's motto, "Connecting The World Around You," is just about as ambiguous as what it's trying to do with its 640029 model computer. On paper, the system looks respectable enough; a 400MHz Pentium II processor with 64 Megs of RAM and a beefy 12GB hard drive. So why are we complaining?

Well, for starters, we're a bunch of whiners. But that's not the real reason. No, the problem is that Pionex made a decidedly un-gamer-friendly choice when it came to the system's video card — it chose an MPACT2 Media Processor.

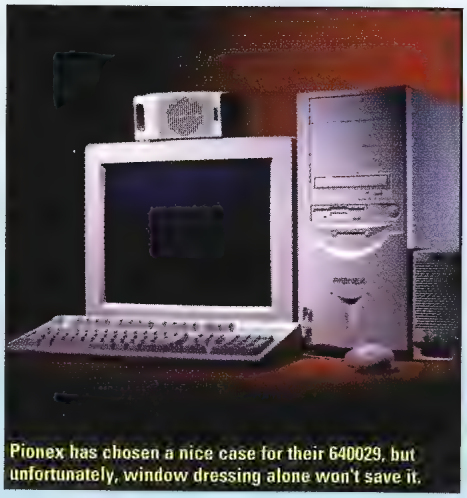
Having never tested an MPACT2 first hand, we were fairly interested to see what it could offer. Normally, when we set up a review system, we look for a 3Dfx-based Voodoo Graphics or Voodoo2 card to plug the monitor into — many new systems these days have them. We didn't find one on the Pionex, though. We wondered: was the MPACT2 powerful enough by itself that it didn't need one?

No, that can't be it; when we powered the system up and started running 3D acceleration benchmarks, we found that every test of the MPACT2 came up way below expected — when it would even generate a result, that is. While the card should be capable of supporting 3D resolutions as high as 1024x768, we couldn't get *Forsaken* to run properly at any resolution above 640x480. Anything higher than that, and the game ran without texture maps, making it look like some flat-shaded game from five years ago. We tried everything we could think of to get the game to function properly, but to no avail. Interestingly, *X* did not have problems at any resolution — except, of course, for the low frame rates it generated.

As far as the sound system in the machine was concerned, it was nice of Pionex to add a PCI sound card — a welcome addition to any gaming rig. Unfortunately, the Ensoniq Audio PCI card that came with the system is little more than an ISA sound card made to function in a PCI slot. It has none of the advanced features of PCI cards from Diamond or Turtle Beach (it has full legacy support for DOS games, but most newer PCI sound accelerators have that, too).

So what does the Pionex do right? Well, it has a nice case. That's important for any gamer who intends to do his own upgrades, and the Pionex case has plenty of internal expansion slots and open drive bays. The monitor that comes with the system is capable enough for the price. It has a .28mm dot pitch and a maximum resolution of 1280x1024 at 60Hz; there are certainly better 17" monitors on the market, but it's sufficient. The image was bright and crisp, and color saturation was good. A second-generation DVD-ROM drive is a nice feature, too.

It seems fairly evident that Pionex intended this system to be an entry-level 400MHz machine (if there is such a thing), and the price reflects it. At $2,249 it's not bad, but you'll have to add to that the price of a decent 3D accelerator before you can consider this a good gaming machine. We did a little web-shopping with one of the major mail-order dealers and found a comparable system for less — and it included an 8MB Intel i740 2D/3D graphics card. If you're looking for a fast gaming system at a good price, you can do better than the Pionex.



Pionex has chosen a nice case for their 640029, but unfortunately, window dressing alone won't save it.

System Specs

SYSTEM
Processor: Pentium II 400MHz
RAM: 64MB SDRAM
Cache: 512K

STORAGE
Hard Drive: 12GB EIDE
DVD-ROM: 2nd generation DVD (Max 20x CD-ROM)

EXPANSION
Internal 3.5" bays: 5 (3 free)
Internal 5.25" bays: 4 (3 free)
External 3.5" bays: 1 (occupied)
External 5.25" bays: 4 (3 free)
Bus slots: 3 PCI (2 free), 2 ISA (2 free), 1 shared (occupied)
RAM: 3 DIMM sockets (2 free)

VIDEO
Base Card: AGP MPACT2 DVD Decoder and Graphics Accelerator with 4MB
3D: None
Monitor: Pionex 17" Monitor (15.7" viewable)

AUDIO
Sound Card: Ensoniq Audio PCI
Speaker System: Altec Lansing ACS90

INPUT
Keyboard: Windows compatible 104-key keyboard
Mouse: Microsoft Mouse
Joystick: None

OTHER
Modem: 56kflex Modem

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	Pentium II 266
X (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 45.66fps 800x600: 31.2fps 1024x768: 17.19fps
Forsaken (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 47.87fps 800x600: failed 1024x768: failed
Quake (TESTS OPENGL GAMING PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 57.3fps 640x480: 28.7fps
Duke Nukem 3D (TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 60fps 800x600: 43fps
Norton SI (TESTS CPU & SYSTEM BOARD PERFORMANCE)	189.00
Sysmark 32 (TESTS VIDEO AND OTHER SUBSYSTEMS)	360
MDK Perftest (TESTS DIRECTX PERFORMANCE)	163
Debabilizer Pro (TESTS MMX PERFORMANCE)	2:35

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Big, generous case for expandability; large hard drive.

LOWS: Not a good gaming machine; the MPACT2 came up short during testing; overall system misses the mark in too many areas.

BOTTOM LINE: This Pionex is not really worth it — a little comparison shopping will land you a better system at the same price or less.

Matrox Mystique G200

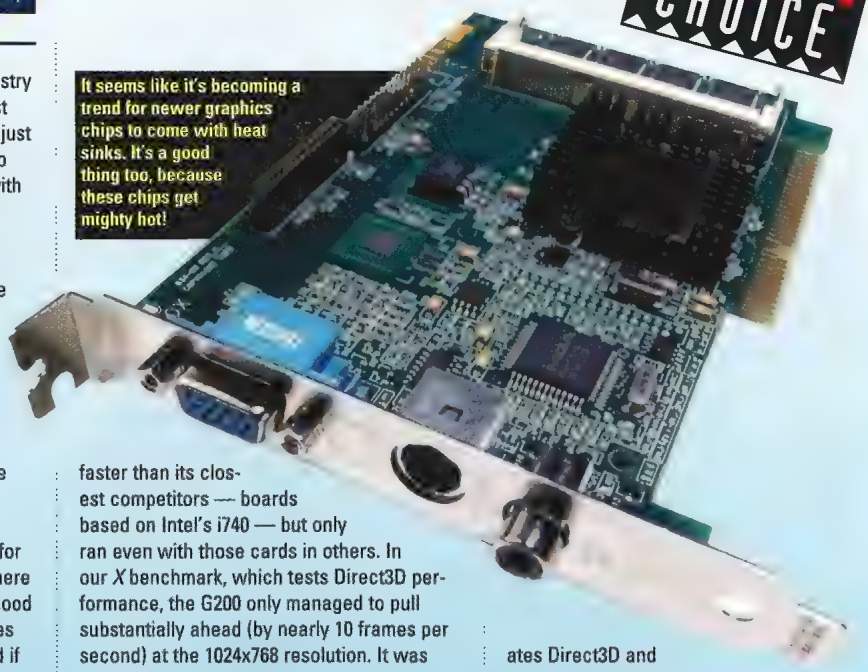
Company: Matrox
www.matrox.com

Phone: (800) 361-1408 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $149 (12MB AGP VERSION REVIEWED)

The latest card from Matrox brings some serious 3D horsepower to the races.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE



It seems like it's becoming a trend for newer graphics chips to come with heat sinks. It's a good thing too, because these chips get mighty hot!

Matrox, long known in the industry for having some of the fastest 2D accelerators around, has just released its newest entry into the 2D/3D graphics market with the Mystique G200. Differing from the newest Millennium G200 in its slightly lower RAMDAC speed (230MHz as opposed to 250MHz), software bundle (games instead of applications), and the addition of a TV output, the Mystique is a powerful new contender in the crowded world of integrated gaming accelerators.

As far as 2D performance is concerned, every test that we ran showed the G200 to be every bit as swift as Matrox claimed it would be. Something to keep in mind, however, when considering a card for its 2D performance in computer games: there really isn't a large difference between a good accelerator and a great one when it comes to frame rates, as you've probably noticed if you've been paying attention to our unaccelerated *Quake* and *Duke 3D* benchmark scores. At this point, these tests serve as more of an indicator of a card's failures as opposed to its successes, since the results generally stay the same except in cases where a 2D card is simply out-and-out crippled. If you're running *Quake II* in software mode and getting low frame rates, the G200 will probably help you out, but it won't boost frame rates beyond a few frames per second over any other capable card, such as an i740.

But let's get to the important stuff: 3D performance. Surprisingly, in some tests the G200 was quite a bit faster than its closest competitors — boards based on Intel's i740 — but only ran even with those cards in others. In our *X* benchmark, which tests Direct3D performance, the G200 only managed to pull substantially ahead (by nearly 10 frames per second) at the 1024x768 resolution. It was faster on average than the i740 at all other resolutions, but only by a hair. In *Forsaken*, the G200 pulled way ahead — by as much as 23 frames per second at 800x600, a resolution that will be the new standard for 3D gaming before too long.

Image quality was beautiful in the games that shipped with the card: *Motorhead*, *Incoming*, and *Tonic Trouble*. Each takes good advantage of the G200's 24-bit 3D rendering capabilities; as pretty as 16-bit is on 3Dfx-based cards, there's really no comparison once you know what to look for. At a 16-bit color depths (thousands of colors), dithering effects can make some images look blocky — things like the explosions in *Incoming* or the lens flares in *Motorhead*. In 24-bit color (16.7 million colors), these artifacts aren't apparent. Not all games currently take advantage of the increased color depth, but the Mystique can render in 16-bit, too.

For the time being, Matrox is only shipping the G200 as an 8MB card, but an optional 8MB upgrade is available for $50 more.

One of the Mystique G200's only drawbacks is its lack of an OpenGL driver — this is made worse by the fact that OpenGL support is hinted at in the box copy: "...accelerates Direct3D and *Quake II*-based games...." With any luck, an OpenGL driver should be available by the time you read this, but it's a worrisome trend to see so many manufacturers shipping cards these days without OpenGL support, especially when it's claimed in their marketing literature. Matrox says OpenGL drivers will be available for the Mystique G200, but as we go to press they have yet to materialize.

So is the Mystique G200 the Voodoo2 killer that every 3Dfx competitor hopes to create? Not as long as it's limited to Direct3D support. But it *is* the closest thing we've seen so far. If you don't have the budget to buy both a 2D/3D card and a Voodoo2, this is one board worth looking at.

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	Pentium II 266
X (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 73.77fps 800x600: 68.55fps 1024x768: 55.38fps
Forsaken (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 81.91fps 800x600: 64.65fps 1024x768: 39.62fps
Quake (TESTS OPENGL GAMING PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 66.7fps 640x480: 23.3fps
Duke Nukem 3D (TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 61fps 800x600: 36fps
MDK Perfest (TESTS DIRECTX PERFORMANCE)	115

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Zippy 2D performance; very good Direct3D performance; terrific image quality; TV output; good game bundle.

LOWS: No OpenGL driver as we go to press.

BOTTOM LINE: Surpasses every other current 2D/3D combination on the market. Whether you're putting a new system together or just upgrading, the Mystique G200 is a great choice.

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ADS USB Hub

Company: ADS Technologies
www.ads.com

Phone: (800) 905-4250 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $69 (M.S.R.P.)

It's not the sexiest peripheral in the world, but ADS' hub gets the job done.

With Windows 98 now firmly upon us — bringing with it built-in support for the Universal Serial Bus — all sorts of new USB peripherals are sure to be on their way in coming months. In anticipation of this, ADS has seen fit to release a handy four-port USB hub. Without such a device, connecting more than two USB peripherals would prove difficult due to the fact that most computers only come standard with two ports (while the USB standard allows for devices to be "daisy-chained" together, not all USB devices have pass-through connectors).

The small one-pound box supports both high-speed (12Mbps) and low-speed (1.5Mbps) peripherals, and it comes with a 7.5 volt power supply. Low-power devices like mice and keyboards can pull enough power out of the USB ports without the need for extra, but larger devices like scanners and printers will need the hub's additional juice. (If you're ever uncertain as to whether or not a given product might need more power, worry not — Windows 98 will notify you if the extra power is required.)

There was very little setup involved with the USB Hub, but that's to be expected with any USB device. We simply plugged it into the USB port on the back of our test system, which recognized it as a generic USB hub and installed the necessary drivers — all within a matter of seconds, and without the need to reboot. Believe us when we say that USB is slicker than snot — we can't wait until *everything* uses it. So far, unfortunately, we've only received a few products that take advantage of a USB port — a couple of prototype gamepads and the Altec Lansing ADS305 speaker system reviewed in this issue.

With so few products to try out, testing the hub was a cinch. After the drivers were installed, we simply plugged those speakers into it; sure enough, the speaker system's drivers loaded right up, and the system ran without incident.

Since there are so few USB devices available now — especially gaming devices — it may be a little premature to start worrying about having enough USB ports. Still, it was a nice surprise to have ADS Technologies send over this small wonder — if for no other reason than to be reminded of just how useful USB can and will be to our PCs in the months and years to come.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Small and lightweight; hassle-free setup; first USB hub we've received.

LOWS: Until the current shortage of game-related USB gadgets ends, the two USB ports built into your PC will probably be sufficient.

BOTTOM LINE: If you feel the need for additional USB ports, the ADS hub is a good choice; it's compact and works perfectly.

Diamond Monster Sound MX200 PCI

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

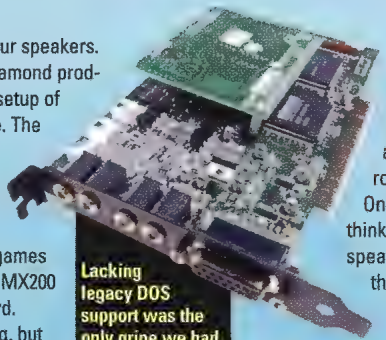
Company: Diamond Multimedia
www.diamondmm.com

Phone: (800) 468-5846 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $149 (M.S.R.P.)

When Diamond developed the first audio card in its Monster Sound line, the M80, A3D hardware specs from Aureal had not yet been finalized. As a result, Diamond was forced to go with a slightly different technology from what eventually became Aureal's Vortex chip. Still, the M80 was able to handle sound enhanced by Aureal's A3D as well as Microsoft's DirectSound and DirectSound3D. The only drawback to Diamond's solution was that it lacked legacy support for older DOS-based games, so M80 users had to hang onto their Sound Blaster-compatible cards.

Diamond went back to the drawing board for the new MX200, using nearly all the same chips it used in the M80, but increasing the number of hardware wavetable voices for MIDI music from 32 to 64 voices and including support for as many as four speakers.



Lacking legacy DOS support was the only gripe we had with the MX200 from Diamond.

As with most Diamond products, installation and setup of the MX200 is a breeze. The install program even gives you a warning during the install that you should only run DOS games out of Windows if the MX200 is your only sound card. That's not a huge thing, but it's something we rarely see — a product that actually reminds you of its shortcomings so as not to create any unforeseen problems down the road.

As with most positional 3D audio sound cards, games that take advantage of the MX200's capabilities are a truly new experience — especially with four speakers plugged in for true surround sound. We've said it before, and we'll say it again: no two-speaker simulation of surround sound can compete with a true four- or five-speaker setup.

The MX200 comes bundled with a full version of *Incoming* and the *Jedi Knight* demo, *Pathways to the Force*. At $149 (with a street price that should be considerably lower), it should appeal to any gamer looking quality surround sound and A3D support. On the other hand, if you don't think you'll be upgrading to a four-speaker system and don't need the extra connections, you might consider looking at Turtle Beach's less expensive Montego A3DXtreme (reviewed last month). Like the Monster Sound MX200, it's a terrific PCI audio accelerator (A3D, DirectSound, DirectSound3D), but it also has full support for DOS games .

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Audio acceleration for A3D, DirectSound, and DirectSound3D; outputs for four-speaker surround sound.

LOWS: Limited DOS support; slightly more expensive than comparable cards.

BOTTOM LINE: An excellent sound card with high-end features that is worthy of the Monster Sound name.

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BAD NEWS: it's down there

MOTO RACER 2

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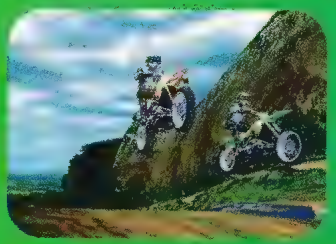

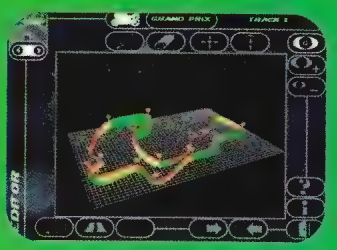

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SideWinder Freestyle Pro

Company: Microsoft
www.microsoft.com

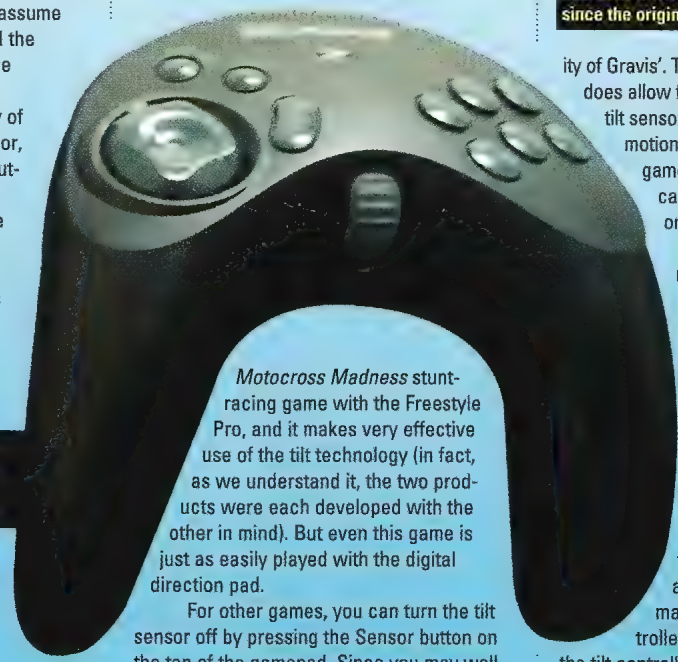
Phone: (800) 426-9400 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $74.95 (M.S.R.P.)

Microsoft has made a name for itself in the controller market — does the Freestyle Pro live up to it?

It seems like only yesterday that Microsoft couldn't be bothered with the world of PC gaming. But in just a couple of short years, the software giant has come to design game controllers that are tough to top. There's still very little competition for Microsoft's first gamepad, the original SideWinder; Gravis' excellent Xterminator [reviewed July 1998] is one of the few controllers that come close to threatening its dominance. So, with the release of the SideWinder Freestyle Pro, can we assume Microsoft has once again delivered the goods? Yes, but they're not quite the goods we might have hoped for.

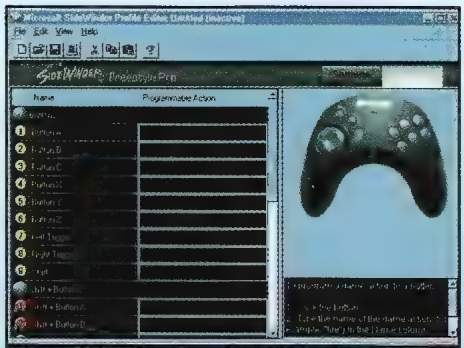
The controller itself has many of the same features as its predecessor, the original SideWinder. It's an 8-button pad — six buttons on top with two additional flipper buttons at the top front of the unit. Microsoft has additionally seen fit to add a handy little throttle wheel into the mix this time, as well. Our only complaint here is that the buttons simply aren't as easily accessible as they were on the original SideWinder.



The original design for the Microsoft SideWinder has inspired many rip-offs; we'll have to see if the Freestyle Pro suffers the same fate.

The defining characteristic of the Freestyle Pro, or Tilt, as it was known during development, is its ability to detect motion and translate it into control inputs. By default, the Freestyle's tilt sensor is set to "on" when the gamepad is first plugged in; in this mode, the controller detects motion along two axes: backward-forward and left-right All other motions inbetween are functions of the two axes together. Operating in this configuration, the Freestyle Pro allows for smooth proportional control, depending on the degree and direction of tilt.

The Freestyle Pro does a good job translating motion into game control; unfortunately, this feature doesn't work well with many games. It feels pretty natural with motorcycle racing games, but using the tilt feature in any other sort of game proved considerably more difficult than when control was switched over to the Freestyle's traditional digital direction pad. In a motorcycle sim, leaning to the left or right is how one turns the bike, so tilting the pad feels like a natural extension of this action, but you don't do a lot of leaning when you're driving a race car or flying a jet — unless your blood-alcohol level is above .07% — so the same motion suddenly seems pretty awkward. On the upside, Microsoft includes its addictive *Motocross Madness* stunt-racing game with the Freestyle Pro, and it makes very effective use of the tilt technology (in fact, as we understand it, the two products were each developed with the other in mind). But even this game is just as easily played with the digital direction pad.



Microsoft's handy programming utility has been spiced up since the original SideWinder pad was released.

For other games, you can turn the tilt sensor off by pressing the Sensor button on the top of the gamepad. Since you may well end up using the Freestyle's digital pad more often than its tilt function, it's important that the controller feel comfortable in that configuration; while we found it more comfortable to use than many competing gamepads, it's nowhere near as hand- or finger-friendly as the original SideWinder.

The Freestyle Pro's programming utility is improved over previous versions, but it's still not as robust as the Xterminator's — although it may be easier to use. Keystrokes and macros are painlessly programmed, but Microsoft's utility lacks some of the functionality of Gravis'. The Freestyle's utility program does allow for the easy adjustment of the tilt sensor's "dead zone" and range of motion — useful, since it means the gamepad's most unusual feature can be customized to suit everyone who uses it.

But the question still remains: Just who is this new gamepad for? Is it meant to complement your existing gamepad and joystick, or is it supposed to replace them? Frankly, it's not likely to do either; its tilt feature doesn't offer sufficient benefit over existing gamepads; and just doesn't work as well or feel as natural as a traditional joystick for flight sims, driving games, and most other games that make use of a proportional controller. Ultimately, the usefulness of the tilt controller is limited, so there's no reason to consider buying a Freestyle if you've already got a gamepad you're happy with.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

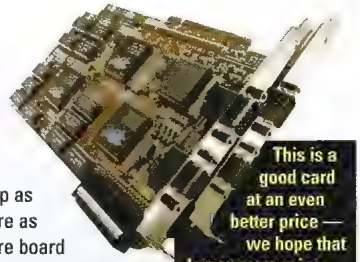
HIGHS: Tilt feature was a blast to use in motorcycle games, where it felt natural.

LOWS: Tilt feature is not suited to most other games; not nearly as comfortable to hold as the original SideWinder pad.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're looking for a new gamepad, and the tilt sensor appeals to you, give the Freestyle a test-drive.

Best Data Arcade FXII

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE



This is a good card at an even better price — we hope that larger companies catch on to this low-price trend!

Company: Best Data
www.bestdata.com

Phone: (818) 773-9600 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $169 (ESTIMATED STREET PRICE)
(12MB VOODOO2 BOARD REVIEWED)

What's this? A 12MB Voodoo2-based 3D accelerator with an estimated street price of $169? As tough as it has become to come up with new things to say every month about the latest Voodoo2 board, there's no question about what Best Data's Arcade FXII has going for it. Price, baby! Best Data has undercut the big boys like Creative Labs and Diamond by more than a hundred dollars.

So you must be thinking that there's something wrong with this board, to be sold at such a low price. Is it a factory second or something? Not as far as we could tell; it's just a plain-vanilla accelerator based on 3Dfx's reference design for the Voodoo2, (which makes it no different from most of the more expensive Voodoo2 cards). We even left two Arcade FXIIs running *Unreal* overnight in SLI mode just to see if they'd choke — and they didn't.

The only complaint we have regarding this board is the same one we had with the Guillemot Maxi Gamer 3D2 card we reviewed last month — its control software doesn't provide an easy way to adjust the card's clock speed for over- and underclocking — but at this price, we'll live.

Installation and setup went smoothly, and the Arcade FXII turned in benchmark numbers across the spectrum that were right in line with what we've come to expect from brand-name Voodoo2 boards.

Last month, The Hard Stuff contents page mentioned how prices would start to drop as more as more board manufacturers came to market with nearly identical products. But we weren't expecting a drop like this so soon. As we go to press, we've seen very little response from the larger companies, but it should be interesting to see how long they hold out before lowering their own prices.

If you're still in the market for a Voodoo2 card and you've been waiting patiently for the right time to buy, that time is at hand. The Arcade FXII is an amazing deal, and its low price is bound to result in cheaper Voodoo2 cards from other manufacturers, too.

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	SLI	SINGLE
X (TESTS [illegible] PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 100.91fps 800x600: 77.75fps 1024x768: 55.40fps	640x480: 88.45fps 800x600: 80.72fps
Forsaken (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 114.02fps 800x600: 183.80fps 1024x768: 73.59fps	640x480: 107.27fps 800x600: 70.48fps
Quake II (TESTS *QUAKE II* PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 64.0fps 800x600: 60.0fps 1024x768: 44.2fps	640x480: 56.6fps 800x600: 41.0fps

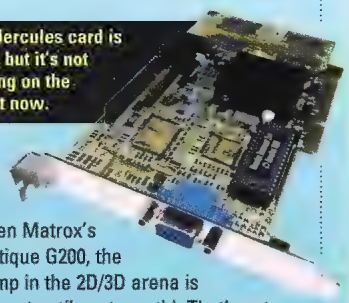
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Lowest price we've seen on a 12MB Voodoo2 — by a wide margin.

LOWS: Control utility doesn't allow adjustment of the card's clock speed within Windows.

BOTTOM LINE: Did Best Data mean to put these out at $269 instead of $169? Probably not, but you might want to grab one or two fast, just in case!

Hercules Terminator 2X/i



The latest Hercules card is a good one, but it's not the best thing on the market right now.

Company: Hercules
www.hercules.com

Phone: (800) 532-0600 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $99 (ESTIMATED STREET PRICE)
(8MB VERSION REVIEWED)

It's the same old song: Somebody develops a hot new graphics chip, and every major video card manufacturer has to base a product on it. Intel's i740 integrated 2D/3D chip seems on track to continue that trend; this month, we've got a new Hercules card based on the i740, dubbed the Terminator 2X/i — and, like the two other i740 cards we've reviewed, it's a very capable graphics board.

The i740 was created as a joint venture between Real 3D and Intel as the foundation for a quality second-generation-style 2D/3D integrated graphics solution that takes full advantage of the AGP bus in its current form (AGP 2X).

Installation of the 2X/i proved hassle-free. With its 230MHz RAMDAC, the 2X/i is capable of 2D resolutions as high as 1,600x1,200 at 256 colors and a flicker-free refresh rate of 85Hz — so it doesn't generate as many colors as some of its competitors at that resolution, but it beats the current batch of i740 cards — even Real 3D's own StarFighter. In 3D mode, the 2X/i can hypothetically handle resolutions just as high as in 2D — in practice, though, most games are unplayable on the 2X/i when you crank the resolution above 1,024x768.

Benchmark scores were just as good, overall, as any of the other i740-based cards; a month ago, that would've put it in a very good position. But now we've seen Matrox's new Mystique G200, the new champ in the 2D/3D arena is born (at least until next month). That's not to say that the Hercules Terminator 2X/i doesn't have its place; with a street price of $99, it's likely to sell for less than the Matrox card, and it's nearly as fast.

As we go to press, OpenGL drivers are not available for the Terminator (there's *another* old song); in the meantime, the folks at Hercules say Intel's reference drivers should work with the 2X/i until Hercules releases a driver update.

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	Pentium II 266
X (TESTS [illegible] PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 73.11fps 800x600: 65.13fps 1024x768: 46.43fps
Forsaken (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 67.03fps 800x600: 41.34fps 1024x768: 25.62fps
Quake (TESTS OPENGL GAMING PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 61.2fps 640x480: 29.3fps
Duke Nukem 3D (TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 61fps 800x600: 40fps
MDK Perftest (TESTS DIRECTX PERFORMANCE)	129

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Very good single-slot solution for 2D and 3D acceleration; supports AGP 2X; sports a pretty nice price.

LOWS: It's no longer the fastest 2D/3D card available; games were almost unplayable when the resolution was cranked above 1,024x768.

BOTTOM LINE: At $99, this is still a great card for the price.

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Internet Guide, WC

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Adventure, Pent90, 16mb

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Adventure, Pent133, 16mb

NEW **Star Trek Borg** 5157201
Adventure, Pent90

Sierra Pro Pilot 5141007
Flight Sim., Pent90, 16mb

Air Warrior III 5140801
Flight Sim., Pent133, 24mb, J

NEW **Star Trek Captain's Chair** 5157102
Adventure, Pent100, 16mb

Trophy Bass 2 Deluxe Edition 5151808
Sports, WC

Freddi Fish 3: The Case Of The Stolen Conch Shell 5149406
Children's Education, WC

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Strategy Game, Pent100, 16mb

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Home/Personal, P

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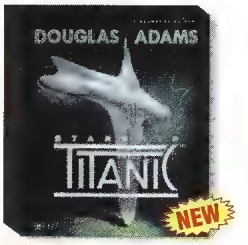
Driving Sim., Pentium, 16mb

Red Baron II 5139407
Flight Sim., Pent133, 16mb, J

Oregon Trail 3rd Edition 5139001
Children's Education, Pent90, 16mb

3D Ultra Pinball: The Lost Continent 5137302
Arcade Style, WC, 12mb

Math For The Real World 5138904
Children's Education, WC



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Adventure, Pent 100, 16mb

Lands Of Lore: Guardians Of Destiny 5129309
Adventure, DOS, Pentium, 16mb

Backyard Baseball 5135306
Sports, WC, Pentium, 16mb

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Driving Sim., Pent90, 16mb

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Arcade Style, DOS

Heavy Gear 5132709
Arcade Style, Pent100, 16mb

Birthright 5134804
Role Playing, DOS, Pent90, 16mb

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Home/Personal, WC

After Dark Deluxe 5148705
Home/Personal

NEW **Tom Clancy: SSN** 5157607
Adventure, Pent100

Balls Of Steel 5143805
Arcade, Pentium, 16mb

NEW **Leisure Suit Larry's Casino** 5152509
Strategy Game, Pent90, 16mb

Seven Kingdoms 5144407
Strategy Game, Pent90, 16mb

Net Accelerator Deluxe 5143201
Home/Personal, WC

Nightmare Creatures 5135207
Arcade Style, Pent133, 16mb

Battle Zone 5142005
Arcade Style, Pent120, 16mb

Jr. High School Success 5128509
Children's Education, WC

Kindergarten Blaster 5128400
Children's Education, WC

Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia '98 5126800
General Ref., WC, Pentium

Command & Conquer: Red Alert 5105101
Strategy Game, DOS, Pentium

Interstate '76 Arsenal 5142609
Arcade Style, Pent90, 16mb

WarCraft Battle Chest 5123807
Startegy Game, DOS

Zork Grand Inquisitor 5137104
Adventure, Pent90, 16mb

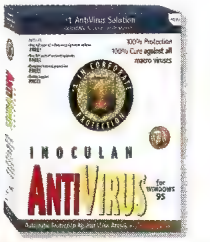
Jumpstart Kindergarten '98 5135108
Children's Education, WC, 16mb

NEW **Print Artist Craft Factory** 5152400
Children's Entertainment, 16mb

NEW **The Hunting Game** 5153507
Sports

Total Annihilation 5130406
Strategy Game, Pent100, 16mb

NEW **Windelete Deluxe** 5154901
Utilities



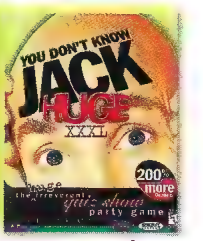
Inoculan Antivirus 5141205
Home/Personal

Aces Collection Series 5132600
Flight Sim., DOS, 16mb

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee 5130505
Arcade Style, Pent133, 16mb

Dark Reign 5129200
Strategy Game, Pent90 16mb

Links LS 1998 Edition 5121702
Sports, Pent90, 16mb



You Don't Know Jack XXXL: Huge 5126909
Game Show Trivia, WC, 16mb

Outpost 2: Divided Destiny 5129101
Strategy Game, Pentium, 16mb

Logic Quest 5110200
Children's Education, WC, Pentium

NASCAR Racing 2 5104609
Driving Sim., DOS, 16mb

Blade Runner 5134309
Adventure, Pent90, 16mb

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Altec ADA305 USB Speakers

Company: Altec Lansing
www.altecmm.com

Phone: (800) ALTEC-88 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $199 (M.S.R.P.)

As reported last issue in our story about true digital audio, Altec Lansing is one of a handful of speaker companies that created USB-equipped speakers in anticipation of Windows 98's built-in support for the new bus. But while the ADA305s do use the USB port as one of the connectors to the computer, they are not "True Digital Audio" speakers as we understand them.

The ADA305 system works more like traditional speakers; it connects to your sound card via a standard mini stereo plug and amplifies its standard analog signals. The USB connection exists only to let you control the speakers via an on-screen interface on your PC. And while the user guide recommends using the USB port and the on-screen interface to control the Dolby Pro Logic Surround decoder housed in the ADA305's subwoofer, the reality is that you can just as easily switch between Pro Logic and stereo mode via the more traditional controls built into the right-hand satellite speaker.

In the loosest sense of the term, the ADA305s qualify as digital audio speakers because the Pro Logic DSP does its decoding work outside of the "noisy" PC environment. But it still uses analog sound signals from your sound card — signals that can be degraded by all the sources of interference that share the PC's case with the sound card. As we see it, true digital audio speakers are those that use the USB connector alone, taking only digital sound signals (impervious to interference) from the PC and using their own build-in digital to analog converter (DAC) to turn them into sound once they're out of the PC entirely.

As far as a standard three-piece speaker system goes, the ADA305s could be better. They have plenty of power; with 20 watts (RMS) of power split between the two 3" speakers residing in each of the two satellites, and an additional 20 watts for the subwoofer, the 305s can get quite loud without distorting. Unfortunately, their lackluster sound reproduction may keep you from wanting to turn them up; as sound from the satellites was overly bright and hollow. The subwoofer itself cranked out plenty of rich bass, but it was as if it had been paired with a clock radio rather than stereo speakers. At $199 (M.S.R.P.), you can do better.

Handsome looking to be sure, but the ADA305s fail to deliver in several key areas.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Good subwoofer; first speakers we've seen that actually use the USB port for something — even if they're not "True Digital Audio."

LOWS: Overpriced for what it is; pretty poor sound reproduction.

BOTTOM LINE: Unless you're a sucker for the nifty on-screen interface, you'll find better-sounding speakers at half the price.

PCWorks FourPointSurround Speakers

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Company: Cambridge Soundworks, Inc.
www.hifi.com

Phone: (800) 367-4434 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $99.99 (ESTIMATED STREET PRICE)
$149.99 (WITH SOUND BLASTER PCI 128)

Cambridge SoundWorks has established itself as a maker of fantastic high-end computer speakers; the $150 SoundWorks and $250 MicroWorks systems are the cream of the crop. Last year, a partnership with Creative Labs resulted in a bargain-priced Cambridge system called the PCWorks. It had smaller satellite speakers, a smaller subwoofer, and less power than the other Cambridge systems, but it sold on the street for $99 and sounded great. Now Cambridge and Creative have topped themselves with an even bigger bargain.

Staying at the original PCWorks' $99 price point, the PCWorks FourPointSurround system adds two more satellite speakers to the package, for a total of four. The extra satellites are intended as rear speakers in a surround setup, making the system ideal for use with 3D audio cards that support four speakers, like Creative's Sound Blaster PCI 128 and Sound Blaster Live! or Diamond's Monster Sound MX200 (reviewed this issue).

The FourPointSurround system delivers the same sound quality as the original PCWorks — which means it doesn't quite meet the quality of Cambridge's bigger, more expensive systems, but it generally blows away any other speakers you'll find for $99 or less. The four satellite speakers are driven at 3.5 watts RMS each, and the subwoofer gets 10 watts, so if the FourPointSurround won't precisely blast you out of the room, it's got enough power for most gamers' tastes. With an audio card that supports four-channel surround sound (and a game that supports the card), the positional audio effects the system creates are very impressive. Games like *Unreal* and *Jedi Knight* become even more immersive; when a sound is supposed to come from behind you, it *really* comes from behind you.

If you're looking to get into 3D audio in style, you'll want four speakers; the FourPointSurround provides them and backs it all up with sound quality that's nearly impossible to match at this price. It's also worth noting that the original, two-speaker PCWorks now carries a street price of $69.99, making it and the FourPointSurround possibly the best buys in PC audio.

The PCWorks FourPointSurround system includes two tripod stands for elevating the rear speakers.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Better sound than speakers costing twice as much; true four-speaker surround beats a two-speaker solution every time.

LOWS: Not quite as powerful and accurate as Cambridge's more expensive models.

BOTTOM LINE: A whole lot of high-quality sound squeezed into a small package and an even smaller price.

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RAM	PC 100 SDRAM 32 MB	PC 100 SDRAM 64 MB	PC 100 SDRAM 128 MB	PC 100 SDRAM 256 MB
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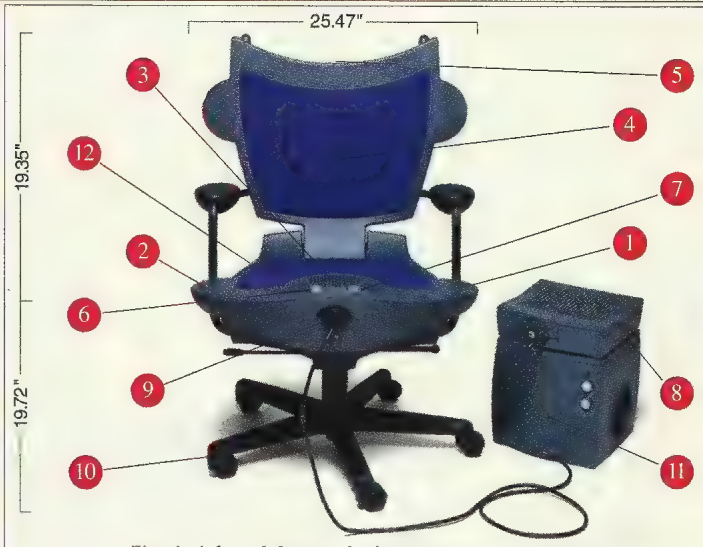
THE INTENSOR™ SURVIVAL GUIDE

(Because we're not always going to be there to hold your trembling, sweaty little hand.)

PART ONE

Be warned: this is technology with a real "punch-you-in-the-gut-while-you're-not-looking" brand of sensitivity.

There's never been anything like Intensor. So in order to survive it, you need to understand a few things. Like to begin with, you need to know what a Sensory Gaming Experience is. It's complete immersion. It's intense tactile feedback. It's being able to see, hear and feel the game you're playing like never before. All you have to do is hook it up to the audio jack of any system, play any game and hold on. You may also want to say a little prayer.



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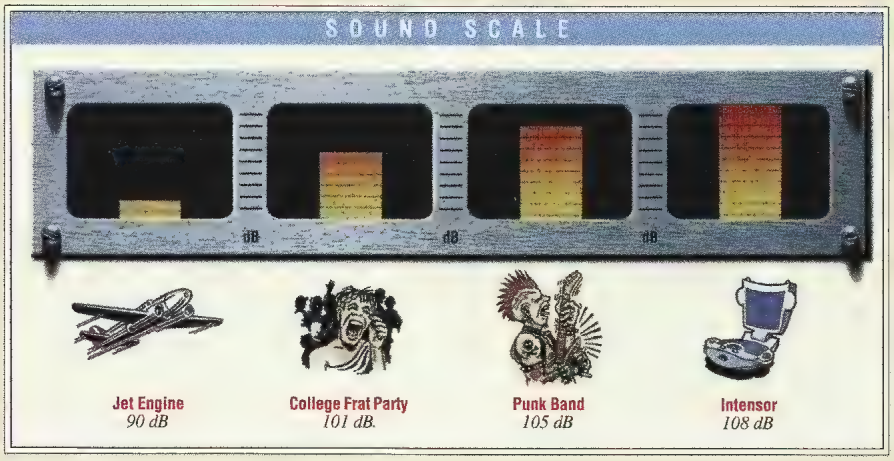
2	Right 2" Mid-Range Directional
3	5.25" Center Mid-Range
4	5.25" Low Frequency Tactile Driver
5	High-Range Tweeter
6	Sound Volume
7	Tactile Intensity
8	Electronics Unit
9	Heavy-Duty Single Cord Connector
10	Optional Office Chair Base
11	Optional Subwoofer
12	Headphone Jack

Fig. 1. *A breakdown of what you're up against.*

PART TWO

Remember, in this chair no one can hear you scream.

Not everyone will have what it takes to handle Intensor's patented audio system. After all, we're talking 5 high-performance built-in speakers with 108dB output. Technically speaking, that means it's really loud. So for the neighbors' sake, you may want to use the headphone jack — which you can do without losing any tactile feedback. But keep in mind — if your ears start bleeding, you should probably turn the thing down.



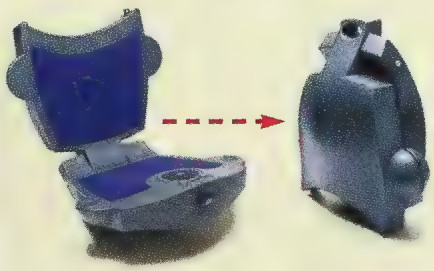


Fig. 2. *At 19 pounds, Intensor is designed for quick evacuation in the event things get ugly. (Shaky hands will appreciate the built-in molded carrying handle.)*

PART THREE

Ducking, dodging, whimpering and other useful gaming skills you might want to perfect.

Be advised. With Intensor, you'll not only hear your games like never before, you'll also feel them. In your back. In your legs. You'll feel sensations in places you never even knew you had. Which means every engine rev, every explosion, every kick will seem more real than you may want it to. So it's important to note that under this type of extreme duress, screaming in high-pitched tones for one's mommy is quite common.

DEFENSIVE PROCEDURES

Fig. 3a.
The Dodge

Fig. 3b.
The Weave

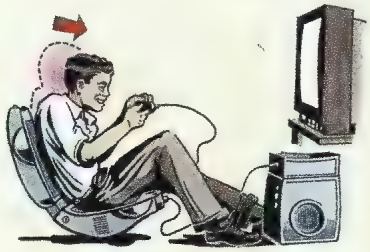


Fig. 3c.
The Duck

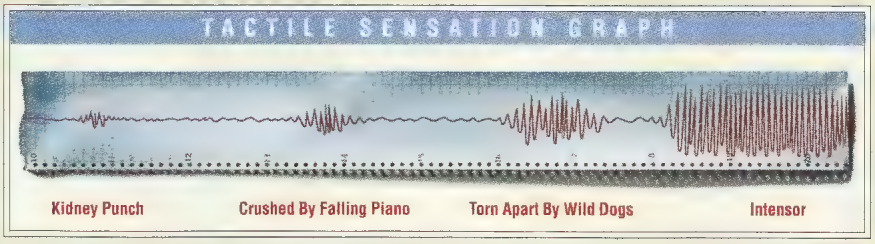


Fig. 4. *Artist's conception of Sensory Gaming's effect on the human heart. Those with heart conditions should proceed at their own risk.*

Fig. 5. *Note: Players attempting to negotiate Intensor on anything less than a good, stiff spine may be reduced to a vegetative state.*

PART FOUR

Any game. Any system. Any medium. After this, nothing will ever be the same.

From movies and CDs to all your favorite games, Intensor isn't just compatible with your current system, it actually transforms it. It may also do the same to you. Once you take a seat, there's a new awareness. And there's no going back. It's the gaming version of the thousand-yard stare. You'll recognize it in others who've "been there." Seek them out. Talk to them. This therapeutic approach can help preserve your sanity.

Fig. 6. *Intensor has been known to induce shock. In such cases, place victim flat on back, elevate legs 8 to 12 inches and call for help. (If victim begins vomiting, place him or her on one side to allow fluid drainage.)*

In the event of nervous breakdown, seek help at

www.intensor.com

Assuming you've read this carefully, proceed to your favorite gaming retailer.

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-Computer Gaming World, July, 1998

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"BOTTOM LINE: IF YOU'VE GOT THE MONEY TO SPEND THIS IS THE GAMING SYSTEM TO OWN"
-PC Gamer, January, 1998

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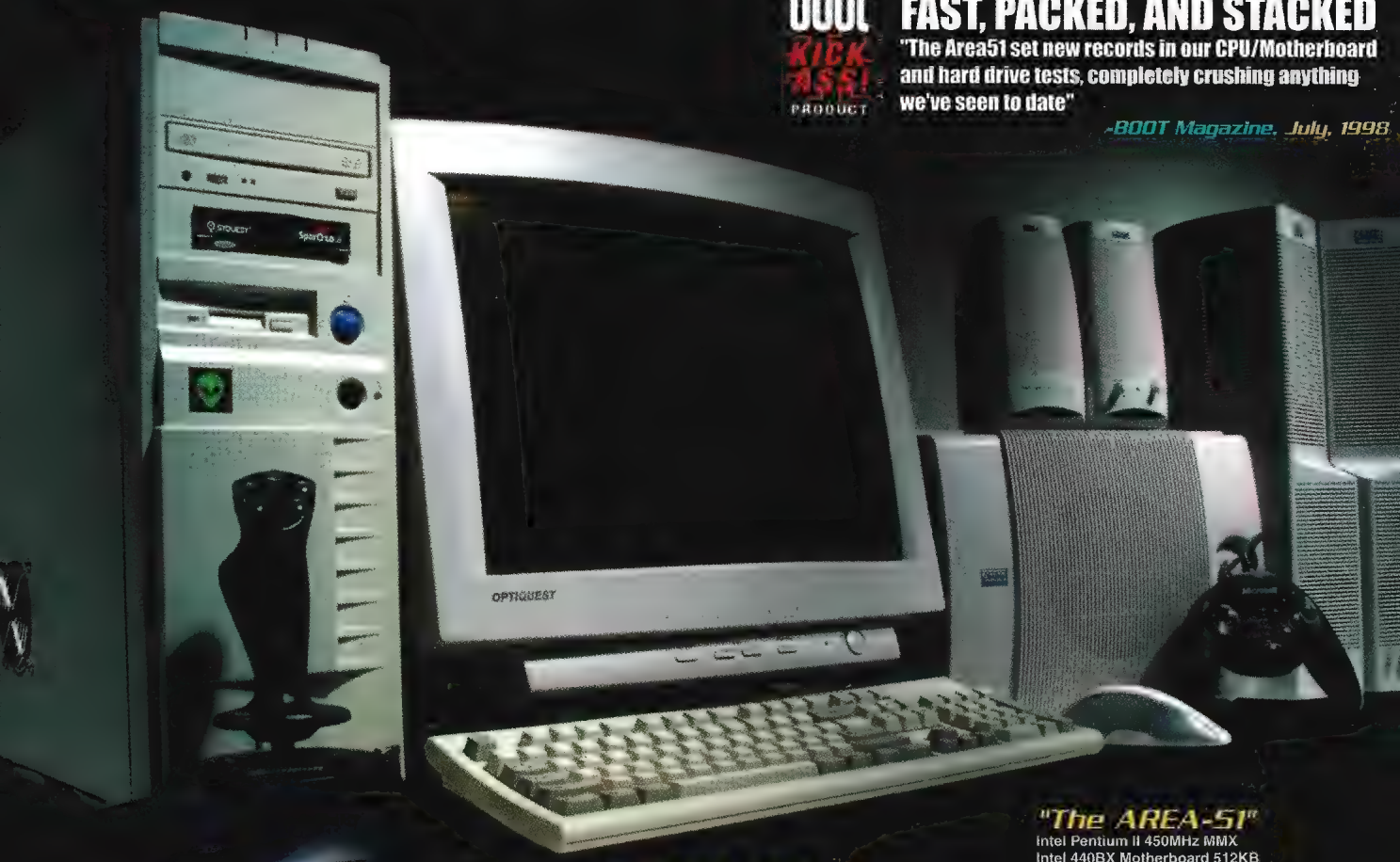
-BOOT Magazine, July, 1998



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The Hard Stuff Sideways Page

WE REVIEW SO MUCH HARD STUFF EVERY MONTH, it can be hard to keep track of what's hot and what's not. On this page, we dare to compare hardware we've reviewed. In fact, there's so much data, we had to turn the page sideways to make it all fit! This month: speakers!

SPEAKERS	ISSUE REVIEWED	PRICE WHEN REVIEWED	SUBWOOFER?	CONTROLS	LOCATION OF CONTROLS	HEADPHONE JACK?	MISC. FEATURES	COMMENTS
Cambridge PCWorks	October '97	$99	Yes	V, S	Separate Unit	No	—	Exceptional sound quality in small package.
MIDILand Crescendo	October '97	$79	Yes	V, S	Subwoofer	No	—	Weak subwoofer; average sound.
MIDILand Capriccio	October '97	$199	Yes	V, S, more	Separate unit	Yes, on control unit	—	Solid, accurate sound.
SSI MTS 100	November '97	$179.99	Yes	V, S, B, more	Subwoofer	No	5-speaker + subwoofer, Dolby Pro Logic system.	A lot for the price, but below average sound and power.
Platinum Sound SRS 2000	November '97	$179	Yes	V, B, more	Subwoofer	No	SRS circuit.	Hollow, muffled sound. Weak.
Altec ACS48	November '97	$149.95	Yes	V, B	Satellite	No	No knobs; control is digital.	Excellent sound, but pushbutton control is annoying.
Labtec LCS-2408	December '97	$59.99	That's all it is.	V, B	Subwoofer	No	This is a universal subwoofer.	Poor bass for a subwoofer. Poorly shielded, considering it's meant to sit next to monitor.
Laral Unwired Stereo IR 1000	December '97	$39.99	N/A	V	Ear piece	N/A	This is a set of wireless headphones.	Great sound; wireless convenience; clean IR transmission.
GNT Electronic GNT-5000	January '98	$54.95	Yes	V, S, T	Subwoofer	No	—	Decent sound for the money; light on the midrange.
QuickShot Sound Force 680	March '98	$89.99	No	V, B, T, 3D	Satellite	Yes	QSound	Good bass for a system without a subwoofer; QSound really makes the sound jump out.
Cyber Acoustics MMS-8	April '98	$89	No	V, T, B	Satellite	Yes	—	Weak bass and mid-range; satellite too light for push button controls (speaker slides back).
Mediaphile Presentation Audio System	May '98	$249.99	Yes	V	Separate unit	N/A	—	A typical gaming setup isn't an ideal place for these speakers.
S2/Midiland 4100	June '98	$299	Yes	V, B, T, 3D	Separate unit	Yes	3DSP: MidiLand's proprietary stereo expander	Great-sounding, powerful speakers that may blow away your stereo system in more ways than one.

SPEAKERS KEY

Controls: V=volume, B=bass, T=treble, S=subwoofer level, 3D=3D circuit • *Location of controls:* The subwoofer level, if there is one, is usually on the subwoofer and is not intended for frequent adjustment. The other controls should be on a satellite or separate unit; if they're on the subwoofer, it's inconvenient. *Price When Reviewed:* All prices are MSRP.

The Game Machine represents what we consider a solid, affordable gaming PC that will handle every game currently on the shelves. The Game Machine has a maximum theoretical price of $2,500 — but shop around, and you'll find it for much less. In the span of only a very few months we've taken the processor up from 200MHz to 233 — and now to a Pentium II 233 — to keep ahead of recent increases in games' minimum requirements. We've also replaced the Rendition card with a Riva 128. But we're sticking with a good, old 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based 3D accelerator; the newer Voodoo II is a very hot chipset, but the Voodoo Graphics is still plenty powerful for most games.

- Intel Pentium II 233 MMX
- 32MB SDRAM RAM
- NVIDIA RIVA 128 card OR 128-bit 2D card
- 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based 3D accelerator
- 4GB IDE hard drive
- 16x CD-ROM drive
- Sound Blaster AWE32 AND/OR positional sound card
- 17" SVGA monitor, .26 dot pitch
- Multi-player gamepad (Gravis Gamepad Pro OR Microsoft SideWinder)
- 56K modem

Tech Q&A

Do you know how long a 400MHz system will be viable? Do you know what OS you should use for gaming?

Q I have a year-old Packard Bell system which is, frankly, pretty crappy. It was a good deal when I bought it, but it was never top-of-the-line. The monitor is putting a dark tint on everything, the processor is only a P120, and the 16MB of EDO RAM just aren't enough. I tried to buy more, but couldn't find the right kind, so I'm stuck with virtual memory. That's bad enough, but I only have a 1.2GB hard drive. I know I need a new system, but my dad doesn't. To that end, I have a couple of questions:

1. If I get a 400MHz PII w/64MB SDRAM and a 6.4GB hard drive, would that still be a viable system in a year? The ease of upgrade would probably help, too.

2. We aren't rich, so we really can only afford a $2,000 system, and only if it's really necessary. Would you say it is?

— Abraham Epton, via the Internet

Ah, the mighty 400MHz system of love. As fast as it is now, we could never guarantee that it would remain a high-end system for more than a year or so. PC technology, ain't it a pain?

A We feel your pain, Abraham. There's nothing worse than having a computer that can't handle the newest games. If you purchase a new 400MHz system today, will it still be viable in a year? Absolutely. Will it be the fastest kid on the block? No. Intel has a lot of plans for the future of Pentium II, and as fast as 400MHz chips are today, by this time next year we'll likely be seeing chips as fast as 600MHz — possibly even with 200MHz buses (up from the current 100MHz). No system you could purchase today would be able to handle a chip with those specs without a new motherboard.

So should you wait until next year to upgrade? Nah — even if you wait and buy the fastest thing going next year, there'll still be faster technology right on the horizon. There always is. If you're ready to upgrade, go for it.

Here's a bit of PC-buying wisdom that sounds obvious but sometimes isn't: when you're in the market for a new machine, buy as much power as you can afford. Buying low-end systems may seem like a great idea when you're looking at the price difference between a sub-$1,000 desktop and a 400MHz ass-kicker, but if you cut corners on power you're just going to find yourself in the same boat next year that you're in now — struggling with a PC that's not powerful enough to do justice to the latest games. It'll be time to upgrade again, and how much will you spend then?

Ultimately, Abraham, there's no "right" time for every gamer to upgrade. Some people are still happy with their 486-based machines (after all, *Doom* runs fine on a 486, right?). But if you've got the money and you aren't getting the performance you crave anymore, now's the time to take the leap.

Q I'm thinking about buying a new PC within the next six months or so. It'll probably be a Pentium II 300MHz with 128MB RAM, an 8MB Creative 3D Blaster Voodoo2, 6.4GB hard drive and a DVD-ROM drive. I'm buying it primarily for the purpose of playing games (mostly EA Sports games). Do you recommend me loading Windows NT or Win 95/98 on this PC? The reason I'm asking this is that I've heard Win NT has better security and faster machines should use it as their OS — but I've also heard its compatibility with games isn't as good as Win 95/98. Who's right?

— Yaakov, via the Internet

A If you're a gamer, stick with Windows 95 or 98 on your system. NT does indeed have the benefits you mentioned — it has great security, and many applications do run better under it. The problem is that most game developers don't see NT as a gaming platform; there simply isn't a big enough installed base of gamers using NT to make support for it worthwhile.

As if shaky game software functionality under NT wasn't bad enough, there are issues with hardware compatibility as well. A given device that works under Windows 95 or 98 won't necessarily function under NT. Every device in your system requires its own special NT driver if it's to be recognized at all. And while most newer PC peripherals ship with drivers for 95/98 and NT, it's hard to recommend NT. For most gamers, it's more trouble than it's worth.

Q I own an AMD K6 3D 300MHz computer with a V90 56K modem from US Robotics. My question is simple: I play *Quake II* on the Internet and was wondering how to bring my ping time down a bit. I have heard that having a ping of around 100ms or less is good, but I keep getting ping times at around 200-250ms on a good day. Is this my Internet provider's fault?

— Carl "RKBaldor" Eddleblute, via the Internet

A Actually, a 200-250ms ping in *Quake II* is perfectly normal for your setup (a common measurement of Internet lag, "ping" refers to the amount of time it takes for a signal to get from your PC to the host computer and back). In fact, many

gamers would consider themselves lucky to get ping times that low with a standard modem. Regardless of your Internet provider, you won't bring the latency of your connection much lower without upgrading to faster technology, like a cable modem or an ISDN or ADSL line. If you're determined to be one of the "low-ping bastards" in a deathmatch, check with Internet providers (and the cable company and phone company) in your area to see if these technologies are available.

Q I recently purchased *Quake II*. Of course, I'm dying to deathmatch on the Internet, but apparently I need the latest version. Anyway, I downloaded the update from id Software's web site, and now I have no idea how to apply that to my game to make the updated version. Did I download it correctly? What do I need to do to make it all work together? This also applies to patches, etc. How do I do it? Please let me know. Thanks!

—David Armstrong, via the Internet

A A fair question, David. Most patches come with "read me" files that tell you how to install them (they're usually named something like "readme.txt" or "read.me"), and every one is different. As for *Quake II*, though, you simply download the upgrade to a location where it's easy to find (your Windows 95 desktop, for example, or the root of the C: drive). It should be an executable file that automatically extracts itself, so once you've downloaded it, all you have to do is run it (double-click on its filename in Explorer). A WinZip Self-Extractor dialog box will open, prompting you to give the location of your *Quake II* directory. It'll default to C:\Quake2, which is the correct location unless you specified a different directory when you originally installed the game. When you're sure the location is correct, you just hit Enter or click on "Unzip," and the updated files will be copied to your *Quake II* directory. You'll know the process was a success when you start *Quake II* and bring up the console screen; you'll see the new version number ("3.15," for instance) in the lower right-hand corner.

For a standard modem user, you are a low-ping-bastard with a 200-250ms ping time.

Q I'm in the market for a new PCI sound card. I recently purchased a Diamond Monster 3D II card as my 3D accelerator, and now I'm ready to accelerate my audio, as well. I've been looking at two options, either the Diamond Monster MX200 or the Turtle Beach Montego A3DXstream. Price is not an issue here; I just want the best card. After reading the review in the September 1998 issue, I noticed that the Turtle Beach card accelerates DirectSound and A3D. Does it accelerate DirectSound3D as well? Because the Monster card accelerates all three. And does the Turtle Beach use two and/or four speakers? What are your thoughts on these two cards?

— LM, via the Internet

A You're in luck LM; we've reviewed Diamond's MX200 in this very issue. As for the A3DXstream; yes, it does accelerate DirectSound3D as well as DirectSound and A3D. It does not, however, take advantage of the four-speaker option the MX200 offers. This feature may or may not be important to you; the A3D standard does a pretty good job of simulating surround sound with just two speakers. If you don't see yourself upgrading to four speakers any time soon, then Turtle Beach's card may be the better choice for you. It's less expensive, and you don't need to hang onto your existing Sound Blaster-compatible card to play your old DOS games. Another possibility to consider is Creative Labs' Sound Blaster Live!, which doesn't support A3D but does support DirectSound3D and uses new positional audio technology Creative claims is better. We should have a review of it in the next issue.

Q I've noticed that "The Game Machine" that *PC Gamer* describes as a "solid, affordable gaming PC" in The Hard Stuff every month has been changing a lot recently. Why is this?

— Name Withheld

A It's been a big year for upgrades. So much new hardware has come out at such low prices, that it's become impossible to keep the "The Game Machine" from changing. At the beginning of the year, gamers could still make do with a 200MHz or 233MHz MMX machine — then *Unreal* was released, and people with systems like that have had a tough time of it. Once the technology genie's out of the bottle, it's impossible to put it back in, so we expect more games to match *Unreal*'s hefty hardware requirements in months to come. Fortunately, Intel has been releasing faster and faster processors with frightening regularity; as a result, CPU prices have been falling, and that translates into faster, cheaper systems. The $2,500 ceiling we've imposed on "The Game Machine" should buy you a hella-fast PC today — and you'll be able to get a good gaming rig for a lot less. At this point, we think a 233MHz Pentium II is about the slowest system you'd want to buy if you went shopping today and wanted to be sure you got a machine that'll be able to handle the latest games 18-24 months from now.

Q I'm currently in the process of purchasing a new 400MHz Pentium II equipped with a Voodoo2 card. My

Glossary

Every month, the Glossary will define terms that appear in The Hard Stuff and may be new or confusing to some readers.

Dolby Pro Logic
A five-speaker surround sound standard created by Dolby Laboratories that simulates the sensation of being in a real environment by separating out encoded information to left-front, center, right-front , and rear (surround) speakers. Dolby Pro Logic works by delaying the time and direction by which sound reaches a listener's ears just as it would be perceived in a true environment.

DSP
Short for *Digital Signal Processing*, which refers to a method of manipulating analog data, such as sounds or video, which have been converted into digital form. When used as a noun, DSP stands for *digital signal processor*, a special type of coprocessor chip designed for performing the mathematics involved in DSP. Most DSPs are programmable, which means that they can be used for manipulating different types of information, including sound, still images, and video.

RAMDAC
Short for *Random Access Memory Digital-to-Analog Converter*, a chip found on video cards. The RAMDAC's role is to convert digitally encoded images into analog signals that can be displayed by a monitor. A RAMDAC actually consists of four different components — SRAM memory to store the image's color map, and three digital-to-analog converters (DACs), one for each of the monitor's red, green, and blue electron guns.

RMS
Short for *Root Mean Square*, this is the average amount of continuous power a set of speakers can produce with acceptable levels of distortion taken into account. RMS is the what you should look for in terms of power output when purchasing a new set of speakers.

PMPO
Short for *Peak Music Power Output*, this is the amount of power a set of speakers can produce for only short periods of time, and is generally measured with no consideration for sound quality. Many companies use a PMPO rating rather than the industry standard RMS to make their speakers seem more powerful, but the number is essentially meaningless.

question is which AGP card should I be looking at for the best performance and hardware compatibility, (e.g., DVD and Voodoo2)? Should I be looking at a card based on the Intel i740 chipset — and if so, which board would be best suited for my gaming needs?

— Sean, via the Internet

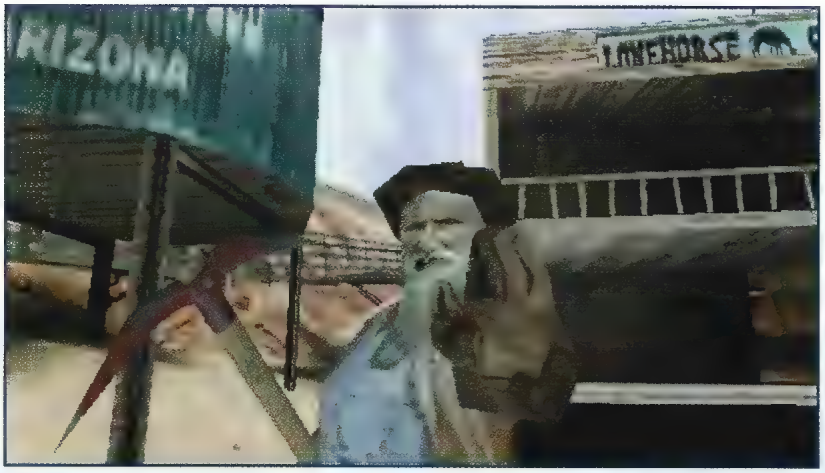
A If price is no object, then you'll probably want to pick up Matrox's new Mystique G200. It's a little more expensive than the i740 cards, but is faster all around. If price is an issue, but you still want a good 2D/3D card, the i740 is still a great choice, and you really can't go wrong with any of the ones we've reviewed thus far: Real 3D StarFighter, Diamond G460, or the Hercules 2X/i — although the Hercules card has the fastest RAMDAC of the bunch, and therefore supports the highest refresh rates at the highest resolutions. Check out our review of both the Terminator and the G200 this month's issue.

Q I have a Pentium 120MHz, and I desperately need to upgrade. I really want to be able to play *Duke Nukem Forever*, 'cause that *will* be my favorite game. I've read that it will support AMD's K6-2 chips, and I really want to get one of those, because I really don't like Intel! Will I see better results with a K62 333 or a Pentium II 333 in *Duke Forever*? Do you recommend the K6-2 for gaming all around?

— Ryan Kilgore, via the internet

A Just what we like to see, impartial readers! How do you know *Duke Nukem Forever* will be your favorite game? What if *Barbie Makeover III* comes out, and it's a better game.? What then? Huh? Getting back to your question: How does AMD's K6-2 compare to a genuine Intel Pentium II? It's hard to say. *Unreal* shipped with what everyone thought was full support for the K6-2's 3DNow! technology — but it wasn't until some time later that we all learned it was actually only *partially* optimized.

Given that the new *Duke* is now being built on the *Unreal* engine, only time will tell if it will take full advantage of AMD's new technology. As a general rule of thumb, though, games that are designed to use the 3DNow! technology run at least as fast on the K6-2 as on a Pentium II using the same clock speed.



"Hold on there, pardner! I'm not sure how my old bones will function with that new *Unreal* engine."

Q I was just recently given some additional RAM by a friend of mine from work. I have the strangest feeling, however, that my system is not running quite as fast as it was before I installed this new memory — even though his gift doubled the amount of RAM in my system. Is there any way to check to see if there is anything wrong with the RAM I was given?

— Chuck R, via the Internet

A Well, Chuck, if you aren't experiencing any random lockups, the RAM your friend gave you is probably working just fine. Just as a cursory test, make sure your system recognizes all of the RAM you've installed in your system when you first boot up the machine. If it doesn't, then you know the RAM is either bad, improperly installed, or not compatible with your computer.

If it is recognized, then what could be slowing your system down is the fact that any RAM in a computer only runs as fast as the slowest SIMM or DIMM module in it. If you started out with, say, 16MB of 60ns EDO RAM in your machine, and the RAM your buddy gave you was 16MB of 80ns, non-EDO RAM, then all of your memory would function as if it were the slower, 80ns RAM. You'd have 32MB alright, which would certainly be an improvement in some respects, but it wouldn't perform as well as if all of your RAM was the same type and speed.

Q I'm looking for an add-on to my video card, which is an Intense 3D Voodoo (6MB). I considered the Diamond Monster 3D and Diamond Monster 3D II, but since the Monster II is a Voodoo2-based card, I don't know if it will work with my card. Will a Voodoo2-based board work with a Voodoo Rush-based board?

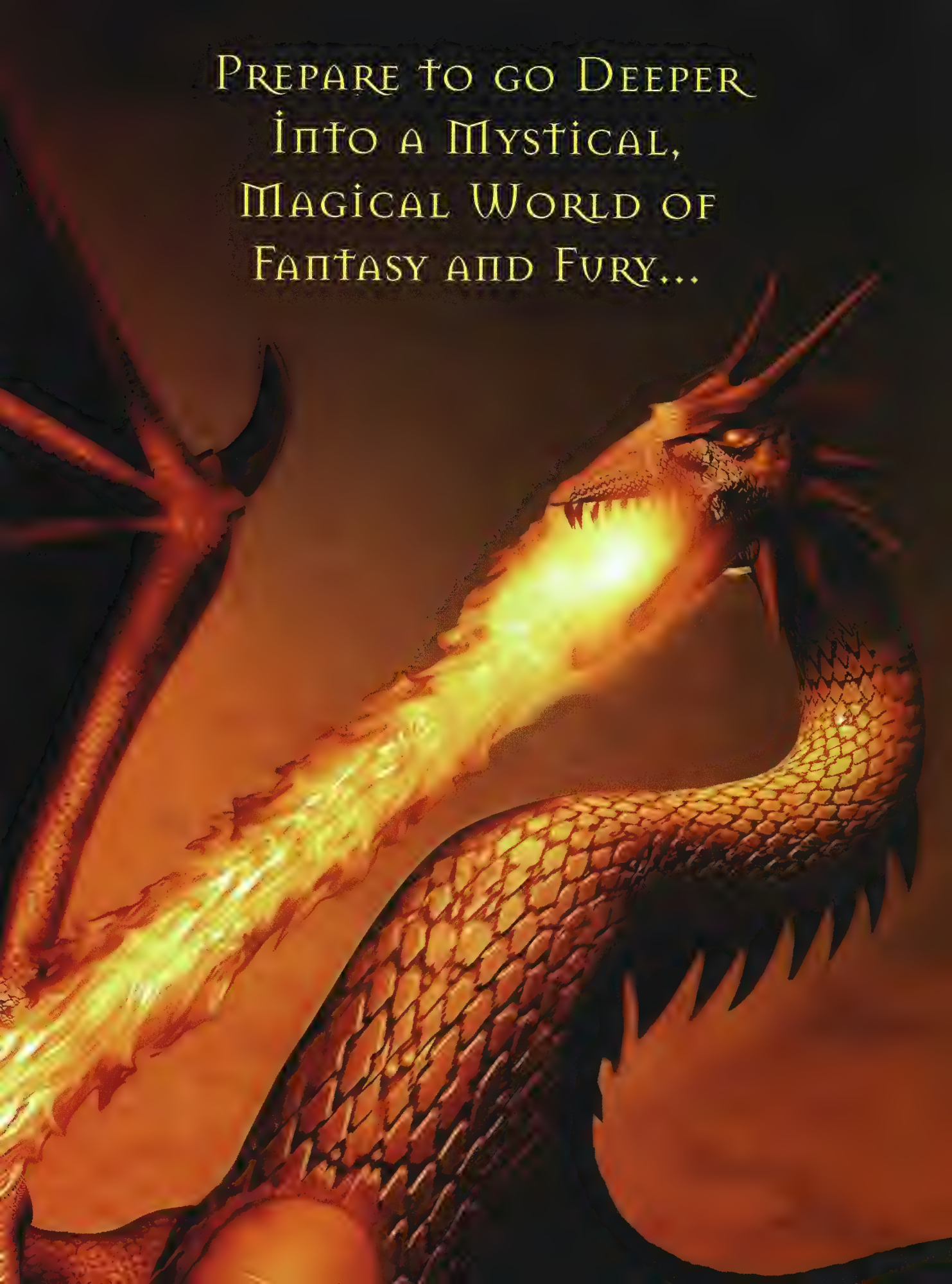
— Kirill Menaker, via the Internet

A This is a question we get all the time, but the answer bears repeating: No, the two cards do not function together. While you can run two Voodoo2-based cards together in scan-line interleave (SLI) mode for better performance and higher resolutions, there is no way to link a board based on the Voodoo Rush or Voodoo Graphics chips with a Voodoo2 in this configuration. See the picture below for an explicit explanation.

Need Help?

If you have a hardware question or comment, write to us at:
The Hard Stuff, *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005

or send E-mail to:
gvederman@pcgamer.com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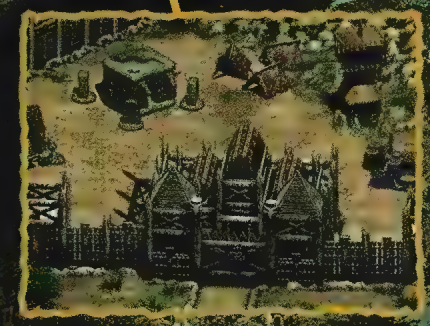

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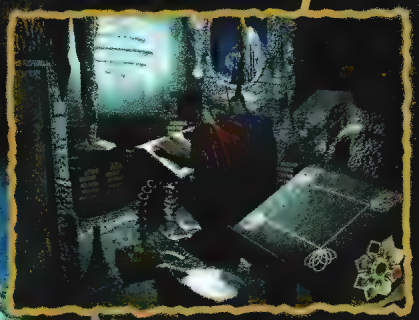

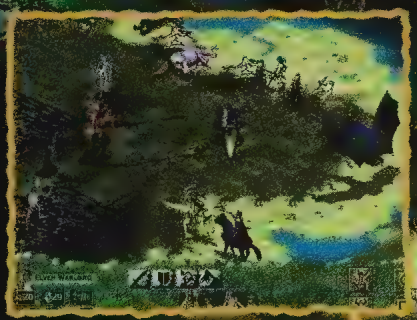

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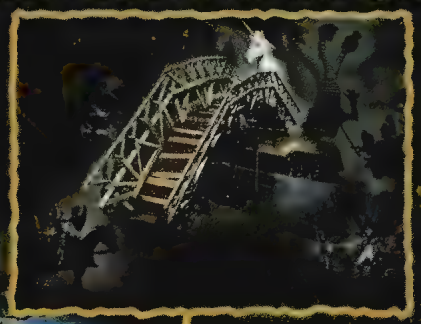

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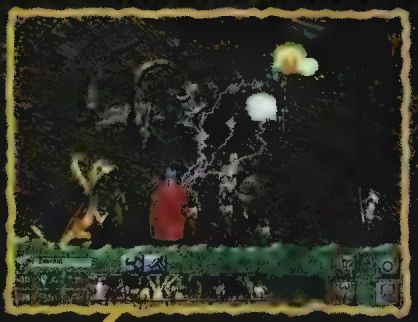

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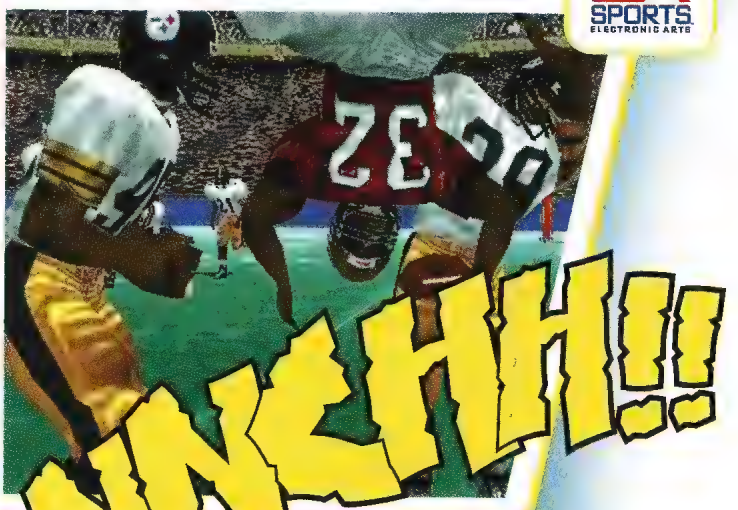

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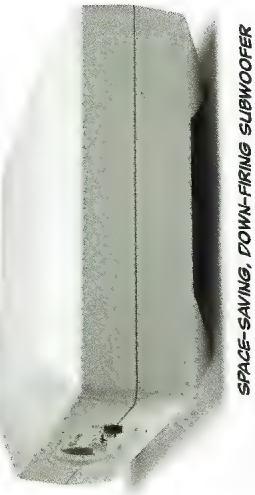

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Actual gameplay screen shot

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The Revenge of the Return of the Bundleware

LucasArts has packaged and repackaged its unquestionably classic Star Wars games ad nauseam, so why not do one more? The *X-Wing Collection* offers the complete *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* with all missions and campaigns, plus a limited version of *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* in one box. There are some solid visual enhancements, and the low $29.95 price is right; still, the bundle feels a little unfulfilling.

There are no new missions or campaigns in this release, and the only real gameplay changes are bug fixes. The major new feature is Direct3D support for *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter*; both games now feature the same hardware acceleration that *XvT* had after a couple of patches. Some enhanced textures and modeling and a few lighting effects generally make things look better, but not outstanding. These are still old games, and even the *XvT* engine isn't exactly burning down the house by today's standards. Space combat games like *Wing Commander Prophecy* and *Descent: FreeSpace* look much better. The cockpits and briefings have been enhanced, but still look pretty dated.

X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter: Flight School is a limited version of the original game, with fourteen missions and nine spacecraft. Eight-person multi-play is supported, but only against people with this specific version, and only via network or modem; Internet play is not available. The game is also incompatible with the full version of *XvT*, and I found no disc-spawning option. It's really little more than a demo.

No one will question that these are true computer classics that belong on every shelf. The *X-Wing Collection* is completely Win 95-native, and with about 250 missions, it's hard to really complain. Registered owners of the original games looking for rebates or a downloadable 3D patch can look elsewhere: they ain't happening. It really isn't aimed at the loyal *X-Wing/TIE Fighter* gamer, but more at the newbie who missed these gems the first time around.

Just what the gaming world was waiting for — another expansion pack for *Deer Hunter*.

More Huntin' and Peckin'

The insanity continues unabated with this month's Dubious Achievement Award, which is bestowed upon *Deer Hunter Companion*. As if *Deer Hunter* and *Deer Hunter Extended Season* weren't enough, we have *yet another* add-on for the most puzzling computer game hit of the year. The main selling point of the add-on seems to be five new hunting areas, which look just like all the other hunting areas, but with different tree configurations. In a game in which you're rooted to the spot like a redwood, this seems rather pointless.

The box also boasts a "woods layout editor," as though it were a new feature. I seem to remember some sort of malfunctioning woods editor in the last add-on disc, but I may just be dizzy from all that deer-attractant scent. Rounding out this fulsome software package is a "BONUS Video: A Season to Remember." This grainy promo piece from the National Shooting Sports Foundation features more than six minutes of talking heads, interspersed with poetic video of live deer — though surprisingly little footage of wounded animals dragging their carcasses under a tree to die slowly; paunchy white men swilling beer and shooting anything that moves; or the ever-pleasant "dressing" ritual (which seems like a very delicate name for gutting and butchering). A joy for all concerned.

The real hilarity begins with the 103-page strategy guide that's also included. A strategy guide! Of course! Obviously, there is no strategy, so the guide is padded with unintentionally rip-snorting short stories by hunters recounting their favorite kills. Prose like the following is typical:

"The two does startled me when they bounded from their beds only 100 yards away from me. My heart jumped, but my permit said 'Buck only!' I lowered my gun and watched them wave good-bye with their big white tails."

Another quote: "I bagged a whole bunch of squirrels and rabbits by the time I turned 22. But, even though I had hunted deer many times, I never been able to kill me a deer."

And so on. Pretty funny stuff, actually, though I think they meant it to be noble and moving and manly. Since the most manly thing I do is choose between a 9-iron and a fairway wood, maybe I'm not the intended audience.

The strategy guide also ends with a lengthy quiz including such gems as:

"Whitetails deposit about _____ pellet groups per day."

"A. 7, B. 10, C. 13."

(For the ungulate coprophiles amongst you, the answer is 13.)

As for the strategies in the strategy guide, there are none, of course, except a few pages of such banalities as "make the first shot count" and "track the deer."

This concept was pretty thin to begin with, and now two pointless add-on discs have stretched it to the

T. Liam McDonald

X-Wing and *TIE Fighter* get a spit-and-polish, and everyone's favorite hunting game comes back for thirds.

breaking point. If you want some real hunting fun, go plink squirrels with a BB gun in your backyard, the way decent folk do.

More Scenarios

As expected, the first scenarios for Norm Koger's monumental *The Operational Art of War* are hitting the web, despite some perceived problems with the scenario designer. The main issues are resupply routines for isolated units (which are partly broken) and disengagement penalties. The high penalties for disengagement are a contentious issue among hardcore wargamers, but to me it's a non-issue. Norm modeled very aggressive disengagement effects because he could, and because they are doctrinally correct. Gamers just aren't used to it.

The 1.02 patch is out, which deals with the supply issue and a few others, and a new patch should be available by the time you read this. Despite some of the problems, several strong scenarios are already out there, and can be found at Tim McBride's essential *TOAW* web page (*http://www.wargamer.com/toaw/index.htm*). Peiping-Tientsin 37, Bastogne, Singapore 42, Hoa Binh 51-52, and many others are already up, along with an excellent new tutorial, new maps, and the most recent patch. This game is going to be around for a long time, so settle in and start playing some of these interesting user-made scenarios.

If we as gamers want to see more wargames like this (i.e., real, smart, and hardcore), we're going to have to support *TOAW* and get the word out. SSI, for one, will be watching *TOAW* very closely, and its success or failure may be the watershed moment for the future of realistic wargaming from major publishers.

PCG

BUG PATCHES*

***Battlezone* v. 1.31** (Activision): The Windows CD audio volume is no longer maxed on game exit. The screen no longer goes black on a 3Dfx card while a mission is loading. When resolutions larger then 640x480 are selected, they are now saved on game exit. The game no longer crashes when run on a machine with certain versions of Active Movie installed. Many other changes. *BZPAT131.ZIP*

***Jane's F-15* v. 1.12F** (Jane's Combat Simulations): On some machines, the radar line of sight code could cause a crash when unexpected terrain height data was loaded. This has been fixed. Many other fixes — see the PATCH.TXT file included in the .ZIP. *F15V112F.ZIP*

***Might and Magic VI* v. 1.1** (3DO): It is no longer necessary to run the Cyrix helper programs (686_p.exe or cpuiden.exe) for *Might and Magic VI* to run on Cyrix systems. A number of issues impacting the player's ability to complete quests depending on how they progress through the game were resolved. Many other changes. Current saved games are fully compatible with the updated executable. *MM6V11.ZIP*

***Panzer Commander* v. 1.1** (SSI): Tons of fixes and improvements, including formation pathfinding; autopilot driving; brake; lack of machine gun tracers; lots more. *PZCV1_1.EXE*

***Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain* v. 1.071** (THQ): Fixed bug where horizontal formation order wasn't working. Fixed bug where telling a fighter base to stop auto-attacking wasn't working. Implemented multi-player save feature. Added nosound switch to the command line to turn off sound fx (more stable under Windows NT). Adjusted modem detection code, which was causing some systems to hang. *PAX IMPERIA UPDATE.EXE*

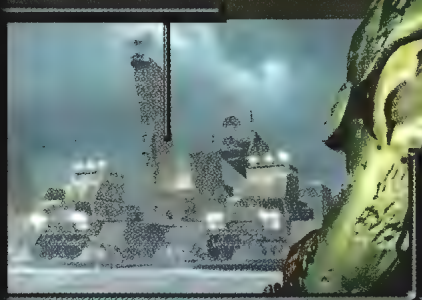
***Pharoh's Ascent* Update** (Ambertec): Fixes incompatibility between DirectX and some sound cards and shortens the time before hints are offered. Read the included README.TXT for additional information and installation instructions. *PAUPDATE.ZIP*

*YOU'LL FIND ALL OF THESE PATCHES ON *THE CD!*

Before After

This series of shots compares visuals from the enhanced *X-Wing Collection* with the graphics from the original titles, illustrating how the new package gives old games a new shine with texture maps and Direct3D acceleration.

IT'S TIME YOU



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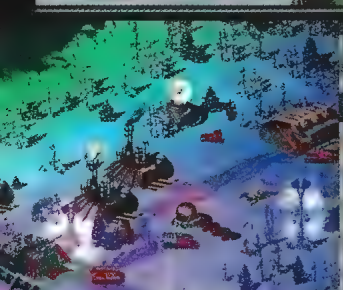

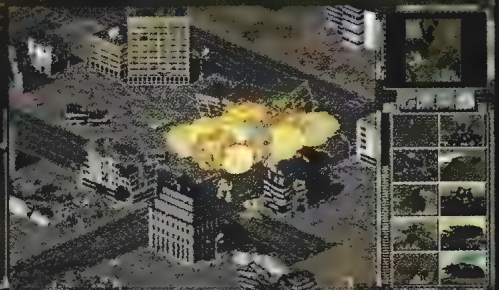

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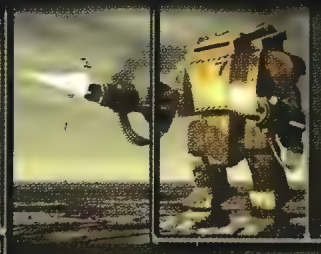

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Tribes — Deathmatch Done Right?

One of the more interesting games in development for the online world is *Starsiege Tribes*, from Sierra's Dynamix division. Although it will include some offline gameplay, essentially training missions, it's intended mainly as a multi-player game, much like *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* was. And although it's not a traditional first-person shooter, it's aimed squarely at the multi-player action turf currently dominated by the *Quake* games, as it adds elements of such *Quake* variants as Capture the Flag and Team Fortress to its design, plus user-customizable skins and team logos.

But the emphasis is more on realism and team play than on the usual free-for-all deathmatch. Each player wears a suit of powered armor complete with a limited jetpack and a heads-up display, and is equipped with a variety of hand-held weapons. The game environment is further enriched with usable gun turrets and vehicles such as a flyer and an armored personnel carrier. Even more impressive, the game seamlessly switches between indoor and outdoor environments without a noticeable lag; the outdoor environments in particular feel like true wide-open spaces, not the confined outdoors of other shooters.

There's even an option for a commander role. This commander plays from an overhead view of the battlefield and can issue orders to other players on his side, alerting them to dangers they might not see in their first-person point of view, and coordinating strikes against the enemy. The commander can also jump in and take control of turrets guarding the team's base.

If having a commander sounds too fussy and complex for an action game, keep in mind it *is* optional. *Tribes* is loaded with options: weapon ranges, weapon strengths, and health points can all be modified by whoever is running the server that hosts the game. Even respawning — whether or not a killed character comes back to life, and how often — is up to the host, which means games can be anything from traditional fragfests to intense, squad-based firefights where getting killed is final (at least until the next game begins).

The Commander screen in *Starsiege Tribes* lets you direct the battle from a big-picture viewpoint.

Playing online should be similar to getting into a game of *Quake*. Players can set up their own servers or play on Dynamix's servers. A Gamespy-style utility will be included in the multi-player menu, meaning new players will be able to find the least latency-prone servers and jump into a new game quickly. This will be important, since *Tribes*, like *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* before it, is focused on multi-player Internet action, not on providing a full solo-game experience. That's why the single-player missions included will be primarily training missions, getting players ready to play the real game online.

Both first-person and third person point of views are available in *Tribes*, a new online game from Dynamix.

Jason Bates

Starsiege Tribes, from Sierra's Dynamix division, is a well-conceived online action game with a lot of potential.

Sharing the same universe as Dynamix's other Starsiege titles (including the older Earthsiege games), *Tribes*' setting is some distant science fiction future where clans of power-armored humans fight it out across alien planets, or something like that (think MechWarrior and the like). At any rate, this ready-made background world should give players who form their own "tribes" some back-story to relate to, unlike the *Quake* clans which pretty much name themselves after anything. Some players have already set up home pages for their tribes, creating imaginative backgrounds that tie into the game world's overall story line.

An early beta of the game has become quite popular on Imagine's internal network, even though the game is not fully optimized, many options aren't yet implemented, and the weapons aren't fully balanced (the laser sniper rifle currently is too powerful, allowing near-instantaneous kills from far across the map and easily out-ranging the grenade launcher). The developers are also readying a "tech release" version of the game that should soon be available on the *www.starsiege.com* web site, allowing Internet gamers to get an early taste of gameplay. If this sounds interesting, you owe it to yourself to give it a try.

PCG

A New Level of Precision for DeathMatch

Phew! I've just gotten back from two and a half hours of straight *SiN* deathmatch — and if you haven't tried it yet yourself, I strongly suggest you do (it's available on this month's *PC Gamer* CD). Ritual has really done its homework, and *SiN* looks to be the first first-person shooter since the days of *Doom* and *Duke Nukem 3D* to have that certain "polish" that has been missing from the likes of *Quake* and *Quake II*. Everything from level design to the 3D model animation is delivered in meticulous detail, and even in its early demo form, the gameplay balance strikes a comfortable chord.

The single-player game is gorgeous, with real-world architecture and expert level design. Gone are the empty, "skeleton rooms" we're used to seeing, pathetically inhabited by clunky, mock-up tables and solid-block chairs. Gone also are the dark, damp dungeons and ravaged military bases from *Quake II* and *Unreal*. Bright, 16-bit graphics prove that you don't need to fumble with a flashlight to find your way around a 3D game, and the gritty urban environments are a breath of fresh air.

Scripted sequences are everywhere — enemy soldiers shoot out skylights and rappel down ropes, others knock over tables to take cover from fire, and some see you and bolt in the other direction. And for the first time, *where* you shoot an enemy makes a big difference; hit one in the body and you take away his armor, leaving him unharmed. One good shot to the head, however, and he's dead (and you can loot armor from his dead body). It's even possible to shoot the weapons out of an enemy's hand!

With all of this attention to detail, it's easy to see why id seems to have decided to leave single player games to others — but even with a new focus on multi-player the *Quake III* team might still have something to worry about, as *SiN*'s DeathMatch mode is one of the best I've seen. I started a game on the "Sincity" level included with the demo, and after a few minutes of orientation, my friends and I found ourselves in a comfortable groove. *SiN* may use the *Quake II* engine, but it couldn't feel more different. The first thing I noticed was that this game requires a much greater degree of precision. The spread on each weapon is smaller than any of us were used to — even the rocket launcher's blast radius is small and tightly focused.

One interesting, yet subjective note, is how easily the learning curve of the weapons came to me. While standard fare for first-person shooters, the weapons did have their own characteristics. However, it was very easy to become accustomed to their peculiarities, with little to none of the unfamiliarity first experienced with switching games. After playing for a while, I also noticed that the targetable area on opposing players were much smaller than in other games — only a direct hit would score the kill. Unfortunately, such precision, while requiring greater accuracy and skill, could seriously hinder deathmatch playability — modem players, the vast majority of deathmatchers in the U.S., may have a rough time trying to score hits with *SiN*'s weapons, while their lower-pinging brethren on cable modems and ISDN could run circles around them. Perhaps Ritual will spot this pitfall, and provide some more forgiving weapons.

For the time being, though, accuracy is the key with dead-eye players having a distinct advantage — the one-kill headshot works in multi-player too, and the zoomable sniper rifle is even faster and more accurate than *Quake II*'s railgun. It's tough to master and takes an excruciating amount of time to get out and put away, but I think that players who master the art of sniping will be some of *SiN*'s more successful players.

The level design is strikingly appropriate, with wide open areas, plenty of rooftop-to-rooftop battles, street level brawls with towering buildings overhead, and some very cool sniping perches virtually hidden from enemy view. The look and feel of the level bears a marked resemblance to *Duke Nukem 3D*'s E1M1 level, but on a grander scale. This was doubtless the motivation to have a good number of "hitscan" guns — weapons that shoot across a level instantly, rather than throw out moving projectiles such as a rocket launcher or hyperblaster. In fact, the level was so wide-open that it made it extremely difficult to see your opponents without carefully scrutinizing the entire background, a very taxing experience in an already tense deathmatch. Once in open engagement, however, things changed slightly. The precision needed to hit a target allowed you a little leeway when fighting an opponent — you knew that it would be fairly hard to hit you, so you could concentrate less on dodging and strafing intently, and more on shooting accurately and landing solid hits. In fact, much of the time I would simply run around the level without looking for any opponents, fairly confident that I was hidden in the scenery. While this kind of of cavalier attitude would be devastating in a serious deathmatch, it made for an enjoyable game — I played non-stop until I hit more than 300 frags. And in this genre, that's the whole definition of a game's staying power: how much fun you can have fragging with friends. In this regard, *SiN* has raised the bar for all of the upcoming Sons of *Quake*. *Half-Life*, *Daikatana*, *Duke Nukem Forever*, and the entire slew of new *Unreal*-engine games take note: this is the new, improved way to do deathmatch, and it shows that a small company with limited resources can create a game that rewrites the rules.

PCG

You can read more from Dennis at his regularly updated web site, located at www.gamers.com.

Dennis Fong, a.k.a. "Thresh"

With its accurate weapons, the *SiN* demo is forcing players to raise their games and learn all kinds of sneaky new tactics.

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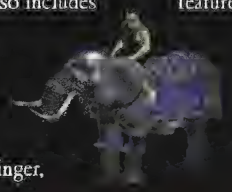

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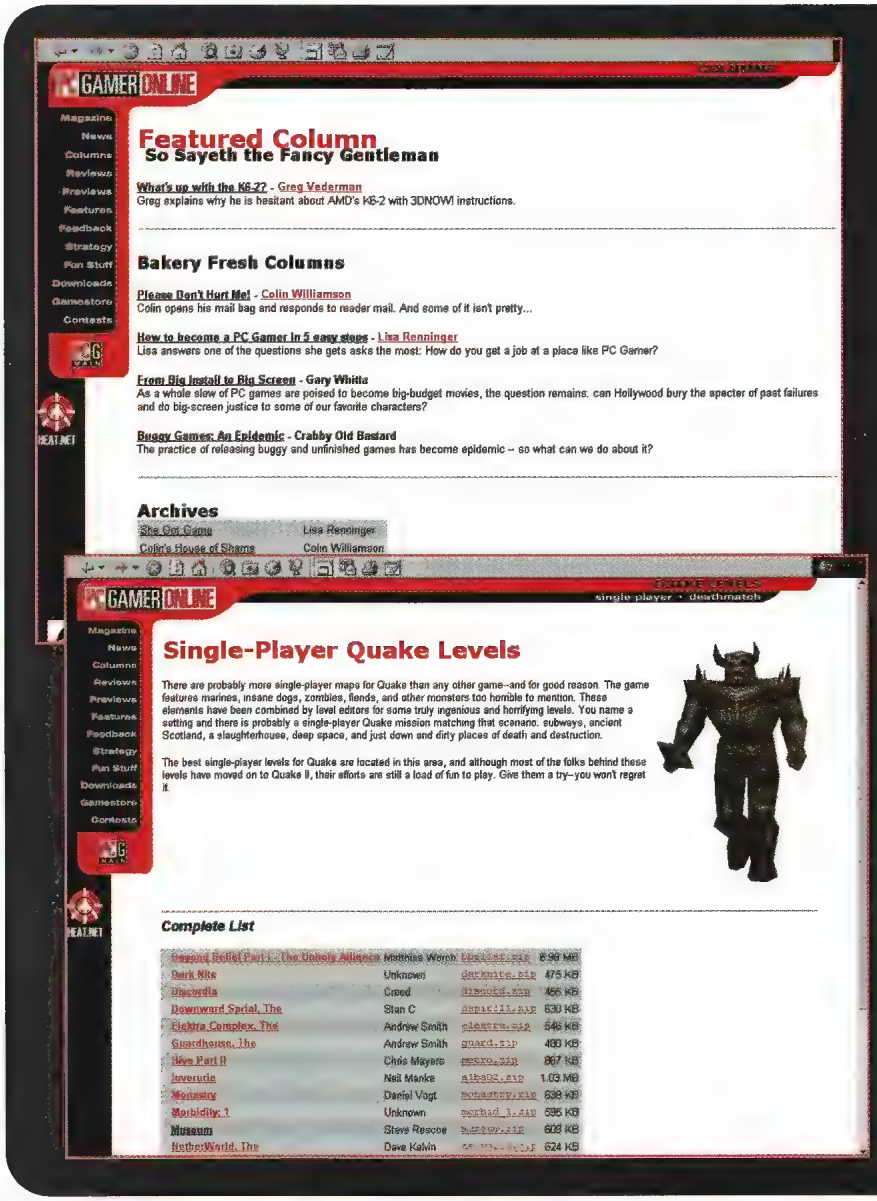
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The practice of releasing buggy and unfinished games has become epidemic -- so what can we do about it?
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single player • deathmatch
Single-Player Quake Levels
There are probably more single-player maps for Quake than any other game--and for good reason. The game features marines, insane dogs, zombies, fiends, and other monsters too horrible to mention. These elements have been combined by level editors for some truly ingenious and horrifying levels. You name a setting and there is probably a single-player Quake mission matching that scenario. subways, ancient Scotland, a slaughterhouse, deep space, and just down and dirty places of death and destruction.
The best single-player levels for Quake are located in this area, and although most of the folks behind these levels have moved on to Quake II, their efforts are still a load of fun to play. Give them a try--you won't regret it.
Complete List
Dark Nite
Unknown
475 KB
Discordia
Creed
466 KB
Downward Spiral, The
Stan C
630 KB
Eidhra Complex, The
Andrew Smith
646 KB
Guardhouse, The
Andrew Smith
480 KB
Hive Part II
Chris Meyers
867 KB
Inverucia
Neil Manke
1.03 MB
Monastery
Daniel Vogt
638 KB
Morbidity 1
Unknown
595 KB
Museum
Steve Rescoe
609 KB
NetherWorld, The
Dave Kelvin
624 KB

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The Dream RPG

I'm sick and tired of first-person shooters. I loved *Doom*, went ape over *Quake*, and was pleased by *Quake II*. *Unreal* is great, but after tons of clones, spin-offs, and copycats, it's all getting really old.

But the potential for the software is tremendous. You know what I want to see? A *true* first-person roleplaying game using the same engine as these incredibly flexible first-person shooters. Here's my dream: take a versatile, powerful first-person shooter engine like the *Unreal* engine and turn it into a roleplaying game with the depth and power of the latest and greatest, *Might and Magic VI*. Players can use their favorite keyboard configurations (mine is controlling movement with the left-hand side of the keyboard, while moving the perspective with the mouse). You can equip a variety of weapons or spells with the number keys and fire them off with a click of the mouse. Combat can be either turn-based or real-time, toggled (just like in *Might and Magic VI* or *Baldur's Gate*) by hitting a key.

All this sounds pretty standard, and there are already a lot of games out there that do it. But they don't have the power or beauty of the *Unreal* engine behind them — the graphics of *Descent to Undermountain* or *Battlespire* were pretty bad, especially compared to today's first-person shooters. *Strife* was one game that tried to take a first-person engine (the *Doom* engine) and turn it into an RPG; that came off as an action game with RPG elements, though — not a true RPG using an action engine. So it's not really what I'm looking for.

The trick? Character interaction. Imagine *Unreal* with actual characters strewn throughout cities and towns that the player can interact with. You can learn their stories and their histories. When in town, players can use skills to break into houses and explore the interiors, stealing caches of gold — or they can patrol the streets looking for thugs doing just that.

I know what I'm describing sounds a lot like *Daggerfall*. And it's true that *Daggerfall* did a lot of it right — the world was immense, there were tons of characters, lots of dungeons, and limitless plot possibilities. But most players want some structure to their games. Correct me if I'm wrong, but don't most of you like to take part in some sort of epic story, rather than make your way as a trader of fine goods? I'm certainly not saying that *Daggerfall* was bad — it was a fantastic roleplaying game. But I want someone to create something similar using an engine that is truly responsive. An engine that supports the kind of enemy AI that makes dungeon-crawling all the more dangerous, because if you let that measly little goblin get away, he'll return with a major force of trolls. And let's get rid of those unsightly piles of junk that represent treasure.

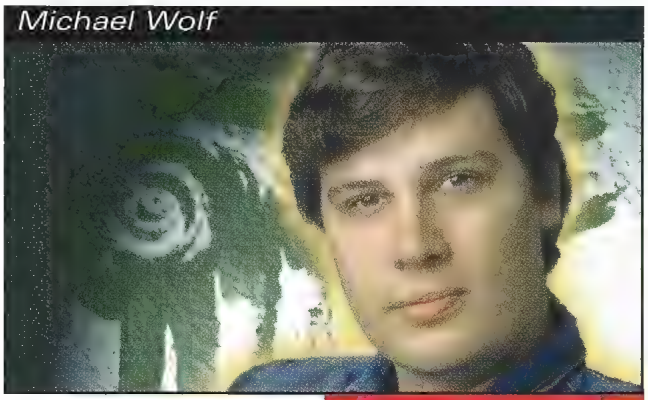
Might and Magic VI is a great game, but wouldn't it be better if the first-person engine had the flexibility and lighting effects of *Duke Nukem Forever*? *Descent to Undermountain* had the right idea, but the sluggish, ugly engine made the game unplayable — how much more successful would the game have been if it'd used even the latest *Descent* engine with 3D acceleration? True, graphics aren't what make an RPG, but I'm talking about speed of the interface. When you play *Quake*, how often do you think about how to jump? Or how many times do you click on the screen during gameplay to attack that death knight coming right at you? A roleplaying game should be as immersive as *Unreal* — you don't *think* about how to kill that troll, you just *do* it. But therein lies the problem. I'm not talking about an *action* game. Quite the contrary. I'm talking about a roleplaying game where you don't have to contemplate the interface or click through a series of menu choice to pick a lock on the door in front of you.

One other huge point behind using a first-person engine like those behind *Unreal* and *Quake II*: think of the multi-player possibilities. Dungeon masters could create custom maps with custom monsters and new puzzles. Users could create virtually new experiences using the same techniques that created wonderful *Quake II* mods like JailBreak and Capture the Flag. Multi-player games could include cooperative players working through a campaign or opposing players working against each other in normal deathmatch. Players could even use the engine like a MUD (Multi-User Dungeon) where they meet and converse and adventure together. With the new voice-transmission technology worked into action games, the need for typing messages could even be avoided.

I loaded up *Ultima Underworld* the other day, not just because it's such a great game, but because the 3D engine is wonderful — it's responsive, quick, and easy to use (and it's worth noting that it predates *Wolfenstein 3D* and blows that game's engine away). Only one problem: you can't configure the keyboard for movement and use the mouse to control perspective. Still, that game is the closest I've played to what I truly want — a roleplaying game where you can control movement and perspective so quickly and easily that it becomes less about the mechanics of the game and more about what you're doing in the game. There's no delay between deciding where you want to go and getting there, and even less between seeing a monster and attacking it.

I'm sure there are developers out there who think the same way I do. *Anachronox* uses the *Quake II* engine, albeit in a different way than I mentioned, and *Wheel of Time* is being built on the *Unreal* engine. Who knows — with *Prey*, *Duke Forever*, and *Trespasser* on the way, we might soon see something along the lines of my dream.

PCG

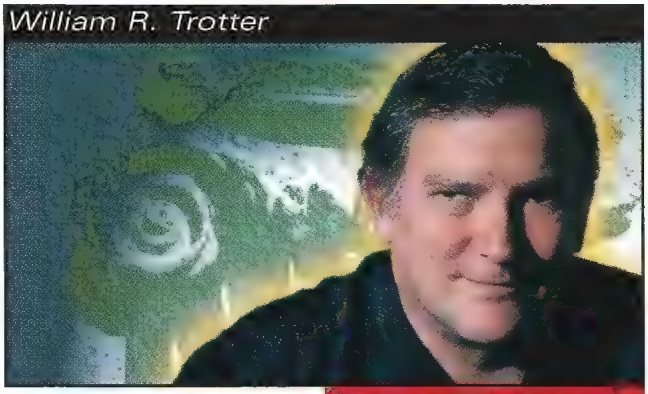


Michael Wolf

Developers have the tools at their disposal to create the dream RPG. The question is, when are they going to use them?

Still Crazy . . .

William R. Trotter



Our resident wargaming expert rediscovers the addicting pleasures of his all-time favorite, *Empire Deluxe* from New World Computing.

Between the end of a rainy spring and the onslaught of the summer's ghastly humidity, there's a window of time when North Carolinians rejoice in their climate. If one has been putting off yardwork, or one's spouse suddenly gets the Spring Cleaning virus, this is the time in which such chores are best accomplished.

In the Trotter house, the target was a back porch which had become a midden-heap of dead appliances, worn out camping equipment, carbon copies of novel manuscripts that had been gathering dust since Nixon was president, scraps of lumber, two broken bicycles...and box after box of old computer games. I'm talking DOS and five-inch floppies, folks. I was surprised at how many of the damn things I'd kept.

Some were unplayable; most of them were titles no one in his or her right mind would *want* to play again. But deep inside the second box, I discovered my long-lost copy of *Empire Deluxe*. I hadn't played that game since 1994. Overcome by nostalgia (from the day I discovered the original *Empire* in 1988 to the day *PC Gamer*'s Greensboro editorial offices closed, I was never without an ongoing game of *Empire* on my hard drive), I tenderly carried the box into my study, rebooted from Windows 95 to DOS, mode and installed. It didn't take long; the full install is only 2MB.

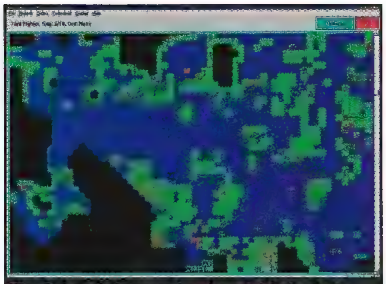
Then I typed in the magic command: c:\games\empire\empire. Cheesy, tootling music, some of it stolen from Grieg, announced the game. I felt the rush. What kind of game did I want? Big — very big — so I scaled the map to be 110 units high and 200 units wide. Basic rules or advanced? Silly question. Two opponents or three? Three! Then I tweaked the basic parameters to give myself a slight combat advantage and my enemies a huge production advantage. 'Cause that's the way (uh-huh, uh-huh!) I like it!

I gave myself some Prussian-sounding game name, the music tootled again, and there was that familiar opening scene: your first production city, your first unit (blinking at you), and the black immensity of the unknown world. Somewhere out there, the enemies' units were exploring, too, and I remembered how electrifying would be the moment of First Contact.

The first turns of a new game go by like lightning, and before you know it, you're hooked. Despite all the games I've seen and reviewed over more than a decade, *Empire Deluxe* still has the power to addict. You simply can't play "a single turn;" you play until you lose consciousness (or your editor calls to drop gentle hints about deadlines pertaining to much newer games).

What an epic struggle was there for my game-world! Fierce defensive stands were made, and sudden offensive thrusts sliced out of the darkened portions of the map. Some cities changed hands so many times they were reduced to zero production value.

As the big struggle developed, there were exciting landmark events: the first time I launched a battleship, the first time I sank a full transport, the first successful amphibious landing on hostile shores. The virtues of the game impressed me now as strongly as they always had: its superb balance, crisp interface, easy mechanics, and sheer replay value.



The Colonel's house cleaning yielded a tasty find: the wildly addictive *Empire Deluxe*.

Concentrating on a massive but slow naval build-up, I lost island after island to the dogged hordes of AI-led tanks and infantry. Then I struck back, blockading an entire island with ships and ramming my transports home like daggers. The tide turned. Eventually, one of the AI opponents asked if I would accept his honorable surrender. No, I replied; you must be punished more.

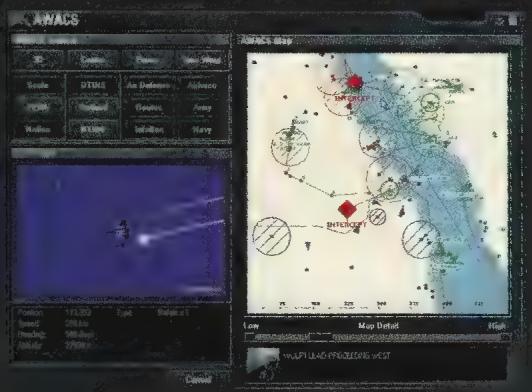
I can't swear it's programmed this way, of course, but it's always seemed that for the first few turns after you refuse a surrender request, the computer fights back with increased vigor, almost with desperation.

Limiting myself to no more than 30 minutes of *Empire* per day, I played a game that lasted from April 3 to the weekend of July 4. Total number of turns: 945. Only in the late stages did any tedium creep in, and that was because the movement rates for ships do not scale up to match the map size. If Mark Baldwin and Bob Rakosky (the heroes who created the original *Empire*) ever want to reissue this classic, I hope they'll increase the movement rate for ships when the player specifies maps of a large enough size.

But that's the only flaw I found. The game was every bit as addictive and intense as I remembered. I have no idea whether it's available any more (and readers should be wary of *Empire II*, a flaccid and deadly-dull attempt to reinvent the wheel), but it should be.

Now, damn it, I'll have to put the game back in storage — if I keep seeing the box, I'm going to be tempted to start another campaign. And *that*, I cannot afford to do!

I pat the box lovingly, though, and mutter: "Thanks, I needed that!" PCG



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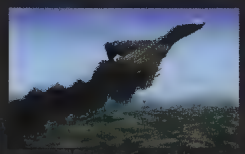

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Will it Fly?

You could say that Terminal Reality Inc. has been very good to Microsoft. When the operating-system giant finally decided to get serious about games, it tapped the guys at TRI to create *Fury*^{3} and *Hellbender*, based on the team's earlier *Terminal Velocity*. TRI then followed up with *Monster Truck Madness*, *CART Precision Racing*, and *Monster Truck Madness 2*. Now, however, TRI seems poised to bite the hand that feeds it; the Lewisville, Texas-based company is developing a serious civilian flight sim designed to compete directly with *Microsoft Flight Simulator*.

Terminal Reality's *Fly!* is not the first contender to go toe-to-toe with Microsoft's classic; Looking Glass took a nice bite out of *Flight Simulator*'s market share with *Flight Unlimited II*. But that just means the competition is even tougher. So what can TRI bring to the table to give *Fly!* an edge over the others? I asked TRI Senior Software Engineer Richard Harvey, and he painted a pretty tantalizing picture.

DB: Your principle competitors are *Flight Unlimited II* and Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*. How will *Fly!* top those two?

RH: If you look at those products individually, they've focused on a particular set of functionality and delivered a good product. Looking Glass chose to focus on visuals and effects, as well as the verbal Air Traffic Controller, with *Flight Unlimited II*. Microsoft has primarily focused on flight models, coverage, and expandability, as seen by the huge add-on market for aircraft and scenery that has supported that product for more than a decade.

We have many goals for *Fly!*, and they touch on each of these areas as well as new functionality that hasn't been available from our competitors. TRI has proven its 3D technology, and we intend to expand on that foundation by delivering a visually stunning product. We also feel that the serious flight sim user wants a very large coverage area, so we're offering a global elevation model and full-globe flight area. We've also been very serious about delivering the most accurate cockpit environment available in this category of product.

DB: How will you achieve that?

RH: Unlike other products, our panels are not confined to screen real estate — you can have full-scrolling panels with as much detail as you'd like. We allow the head to pan in 45 degree increments, as well as up and down. This adds up to three head positions (level, up, and down) for eight viewing angles, for a total of 24 viewing positions. Since each of these can have a fixed bitmap or a fully functioning cockpit panel, you can really do some incredible detail.

DB: What planes will be modeled in the initial release?

RH: For version 1.0, we'll deliver five aircraft. We're currently working on the Cessna 172R Skyhawk, the New Piper Malibu Mirage, the New Piper Navajo, the Raytheon/Beechcraft King Air 200, and the Cessna Citation business jet. We're purposely waiting to deliver user-flyable jumbo jets simply because we want to deliver fully functional aircraft with all panels within the pilot's reach complete and accurate. But our engine allows for the modification and creation of a wide variety of aircraft from external files. We'll be releasing the specifications and (hopefully) a simple editor to allow users to create their own aircraft shortly after we release.

DB: With TRI's action-game background, some sim fans are bound to wonder how realistic *Fly!* will be. How do you respond to them?

RH: The engineer responsible for the flight models for each of the aircraft is a degreed aerospace engineer, with over a decade of experience working on military and commercial systems and simulators. Oh, and there is the small fact that our president was the lead developer of *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0*, and our vice-president is the former business manager of Mallard Software. We have some extremely impressive flight simulation experience in-house. I can tell you that with the Cessna 172 that we showed at E3, I had multiple 172 pilots fly it and tell me the flight model was dead-on.

With solid flight models and a globe-spanning game world to match *Microsoft Flight Simulator*, visuals and a full-speech, interactive air traffic controller to match *Flight Unlimited II* — plus touches of its own like extensive, picture-perfect cockpits — *Fly!* looks like it'll have plenty of juice to compete with the big boys when it releases in December. I'm looking forward to it.

PCG

Dan Bennett

The creators of *Fury*^{3} and *Monster Truck Madness* have proven they know action games — but can they handle a serious flight sim?

With fantastic graphics and the most realistic cockpits we've seen, Terminal Reality's *Fly!* is aiming to take on *Microsoft Flight Simulator* and *Flight Unlimited II*.

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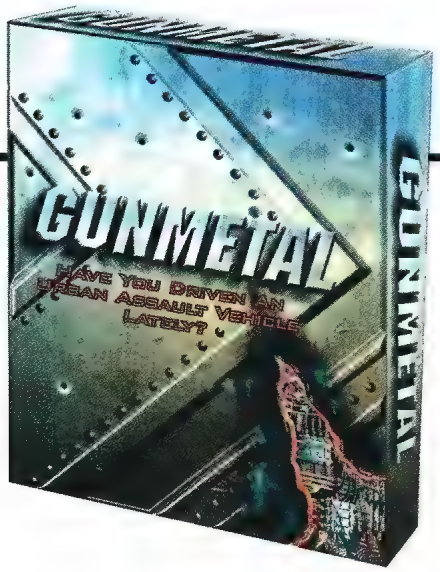

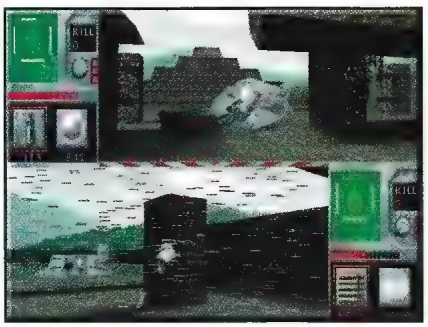

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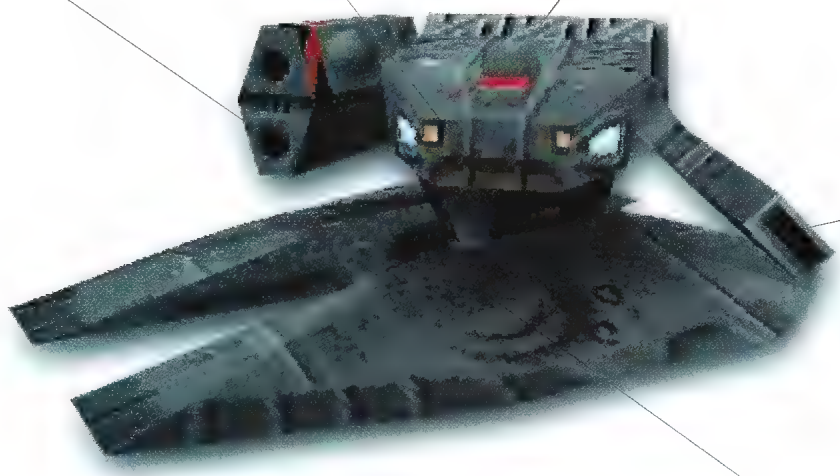

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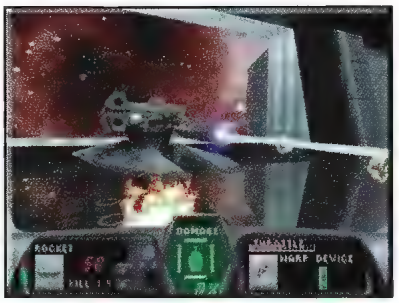

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THE SYNERGY

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SOLUTIONS • TECHNIQUES • QUICK TIPS

Hey, we know that the big world out there can sometimes be unkind. That's why the Strategy Central crew is here to help ease your pain. We've got hints, tips, and cheats for some of your favorite games this month, including *Descent: Freespace*, *Mech Commander*, *Unreal*, and more!

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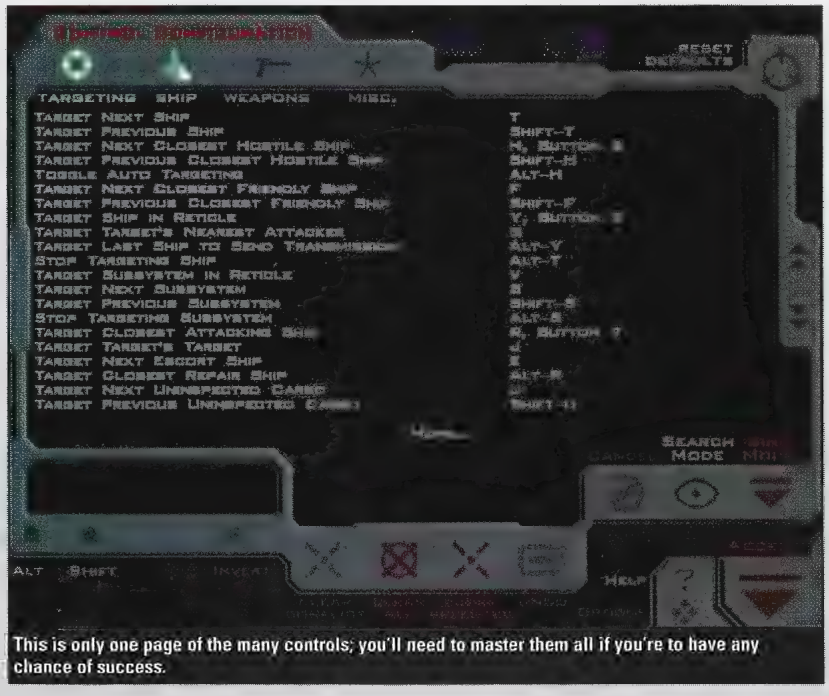
Descent: Freespace — The Great War

Strategy task master Joel Durham is here to whip you into shape!

All right, maggots! Front and center! There's a war out there and we have to win it, and that means it's time for you little mama's boys to wipe those stupid looks off your pretty little mugs and get out there and kick some Shivan ass!

It's up to me to whip you little pukes into shape. We've lost a lot of good pilots already, and to be honest, you don't look too promising. But my orders are to turn you into killing machines, and that's just what I'm gonna do.

Now I know what you're saying. "Sir, I *hate* strategy guides that are written from the perspective of an overbearing drill sergeant, *sir!*" Well, too damn bad! I've already gotten this far, so you'd better learn to like it. Now drop and give me twenty!



This is only one page of the many controls; you'll need to master them all if you're to have any chance of success.

The Basics

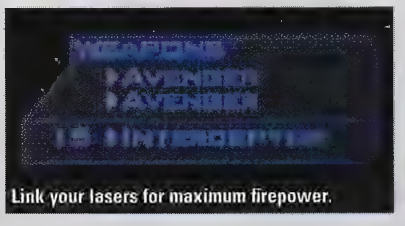
The most basic and mandatory step toward success in the cockpit is simple: *Learn the controls.* Take a gander at the reference card and you'll see that there's a ton of keyboard commands for piloting a GTA vessel. Sure, you can just grab the stick and fly; that may get you through the first few missions, but the first capital ship you try to take on will turn you and your wing into scrap so fast you'll never even see its turrets.

You should try to learn *all* of the controls, but concentrate especially on the following:

Learn how to roll. The key controls are keypad 7 and 9, but if you've got a joystick with a twist axis, then use that. Working this ability into your repertoire will make you a much more effective pilot. It's easier to shake a pursuer by banking and pulling up or down than by simply turning. Rolling will also come in handy for negotiating the nooks and crannies when you're up close and personal with a capital ship.

If your loadout contains more than one of either type of weapon — beam or missile — you can link 'em up. We recommend linking the beam weapons for maximum effectiveness, but leave the missiles on single fire for duking it out with fighters and for taking out cap ships' subsystems. Linking missiles or bombs in those situations can lead to waste, and the less time you spend reloading, the more time you have to dish out pain to your enemy.

Be sure to master the ships' sophisticated energy management systems. The



Link your lasers for maximum firepower.

You can change your HUD color from the default green. Since some of the targeting and radar information is green, you might want to change the HUD to amber or blue.

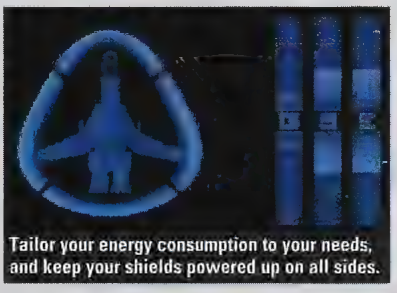
energy generated by Terran fighters' reactors can be custom channeled into two or three systems: the engines, the weapons and, when you have them, shields.

The more energy you divert to your engines, the faster your ship will go. Also, your afterburner will recharge faster with more engine energy. If possible, keep your engines cranked up enough to keep up with the enemy's fastest fighter. It'll make both pursing and escaping from them easier, and you'll be less dependent on your afterburner.

Increasing your weapon energy causes your weapons to recharge faster. It has no effect on how much damage your weapons cause. You can usually keep this set pretty low and use the energy elsewhere. Even at a low setting, your weapons will recharge faster than you'll use them in normal combat.

Just like your weapons, shields will recharge faster with more energy diverted to them. It's a good idea to keep them at least at their default setting unless you're pursuing or finishing off a disarmed cap ship — then feel free to drop them down to nothing. If more bandits warp in, don't forget to power 'em up quick!

You have even more control over the shield system. It's broken into four quadrants — front, rear, port, and starboard. Keep an eye on the readout, and when you take a hit, power up that quadrant. When you're going after an armed capital ship, keep your finger on the front shield button unless you pick up a bandit. In this case, alter front and rear until you lose 'em.



Tailor your energy consumption to your needs, and keep your shields powered up on all sides.

Targeting

The training missions will teach you the basics on the subject of targeting, but there's a lot more to learn. Just the targeting controls alone comprise about 20 different key commands.

The easiest targeting method is to just hit the T key, but that cycles through every ship in the mix, enemy *and* friendly. The H key, and also button 3 on the joystick, targets your closest hostile. If you hit that command again right away, you can cycle through hostile targets. This allows you to quickly locate a specific enemy target. Learn the technique. Know it. Live it.

Targeting capital ships is a layered process. You can always target the ship itself, but those suckers are huge. Usually, your orders will be to disable it and/or disarm it, and even if you're out to destroy it you'll need a better method than simply chipping away at it. Fortunately, the control centers for various subsystems can be targeted individually, and so can the weaponry. You cycle through the systems or turrets using the S and K keys respectively.

Finally, and most importantly, learn the targeting shortcut interface. Hit F3 in a mission to reference it. With this ingenious interface, you can instantly target mission critical vessels at any time with a simple F-key. Not only that, but you can assign groups of ships to one hotkey, which can make it a hell of a lot quicker to issue orders. When you hit a hotkey assigned to a wing, you'll see the entire wing highlighted with one of the ships targeted. If you hit the same hotkey

Tips for Specific Missions

Avenging Angels

Your wing must disable a stolen GTA transport ship, the *Omega*, upon which a defector is attempting to make a getaway. Stop it before it docks with the *Rasputin*. As soon as the mission starts, target the *Omega's* engines and disable them — worry about the weapons later. Have one of your wingmen go after the *Rasputin*, while the rest engage the fighters.

Victory, sweet victory! The GTA Comet warps out with the disabled Omega.

Paving the Way

Three jump nodes form a triangle at the locale for this mission. Stay in the middle as the Vasudan ships warp in at one node and make their way to warp out at another. Use your afterburner to intercept enemy ships as they warp in and dispense them as quickly as possible.

It's like playing [illegible] in 3D! Keep those rocks away from your base ship!

Pay attention to the mission briefings. Use this knowledge to modify your ships and weapons for the best possible chance at success.

numerous times, your target will cycle through the various ships in that group.

Communications

Pilots — it is *absolutely vital* that you master the intricacies of giving orders to your wingmen efficiently. If you have to keep taking your eyes away from the HUD to look at the comm menu, you're screwed.

There are convenient shift-key shortcuts for every order you can give. These can save a lot of precious time, which may make the difference between victory and hot death in a flaming ball of wreckage.

To issue an order to perform an action on another ship, first target that ship, using the hotkeys or the targeting system. For example, target the ship you want to protect, or the ship you want taken out. If you're going for a specific turrets or subsystem, target it. Then hit the shortcut for the order you want to issue, and hit the hotkey for the ship or ships you want to issue the order to.

When ordering your boys and girls to do something that doesn't involve another ship, like covering you, leaving, forming up, general engagement orders and so on, first enter the shortcut for that order, then hit the hotkey for the ship or ships you want to issue the order to.

The *only* time you should wade through the comm menu is when you don't have a hotkey assigned to the ship you want to give an order to. The comm menu only slows you down and makes you weak. Learn to hate it and avoid using it at all costs.

Situational Tactics

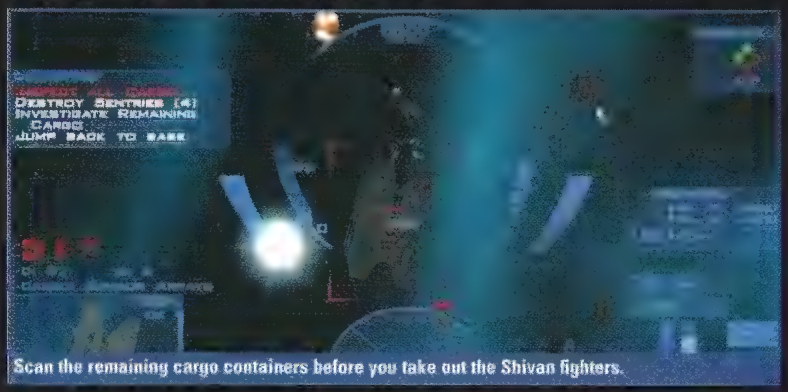
There are three situations you'll find yourself in repeatedly: dogfights, escorting a friendly, and attacking an enemy cruiser. Knowing exactly how to handle these situations is extremely important to the survival of you and your command.

DOGFIGHTING

Watch your six. If you *do* pick one up, target the bandit by hitting the R key. Keep those rear shields powered up if you have 'em. If you're traveling at high speed, slow down as quickly as you can. The bandit should shoot past you and then it's your turn to dish out the hurt. At lower speeds, hit your afterburner to get some distance, then turn and take 'em head on.

Pandora's Box

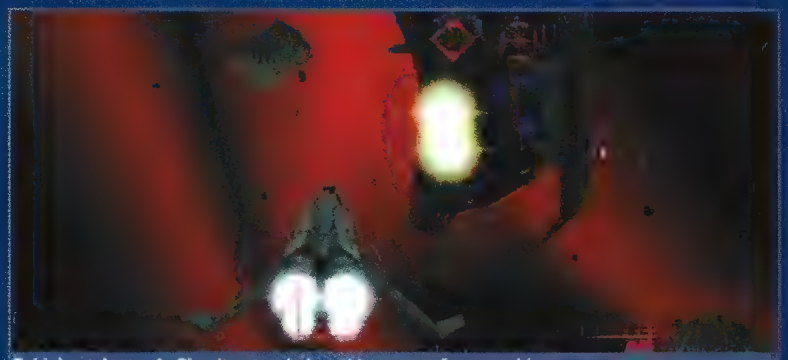
The objective is to scan some Shivan cargo containers and take out the automated guns to protect them. This mission is a trap though, as Shivan fighters warp in en masse and destroy most of the containers. Get to the cargo containers *fast* and order your wingmen to cover you. Ignore everything until you've scanned the cargo containers.



Scan the remaining cargo containers before you take out the Shivan fighters.

Where Eagles Dare

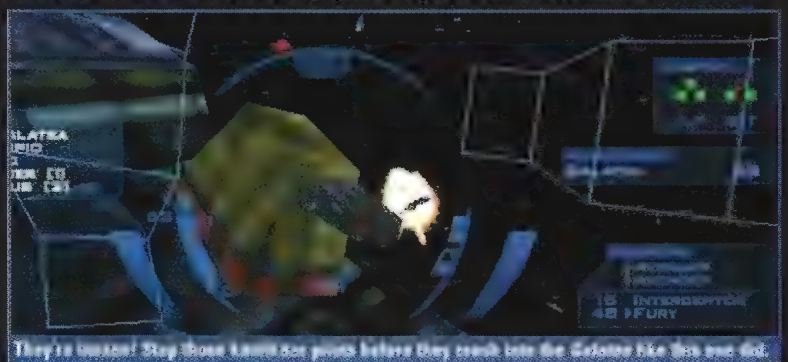
You're to attack a cargo depot in an asteroid belt. Your goal is to wipe out the enemy transports designated Gemini and wipe out all other enemy vessels. Toward the end of this mission, an enemy wave warps in near the jump node where your cargo ships warp in. Watch for it and get over there *fast* to protect your ships since you'll be quite a distance away.



Takin' out the trash: Slug it out and clear this sector of enemy ships.

Tenderizer

There are lots of surprises in this mission. Once again, you're escorting the *Galatea*. Initially, your orders are to inspect some sentry guns near the jump node. Watch out — they open fire on you when you scan the first one while Hammer of Light ships warp in. Take out all the enemies quickly, but save your interceptor missiles. After the *Galatea* warps in, you'll have your hands full when another few waves of enemy fighters warp in on a kamikaze mission!



They're inside! Stop those kamikaze pests before they crash into the Galatea like the one did!

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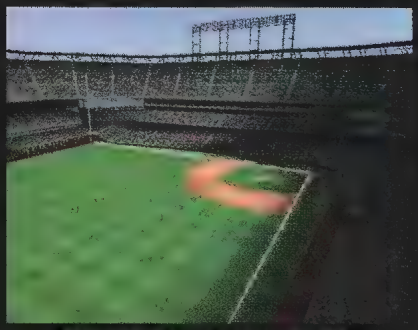

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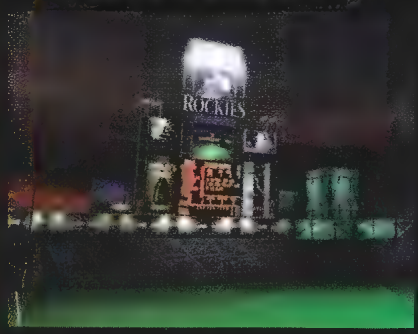

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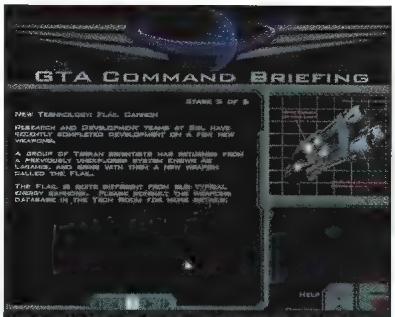
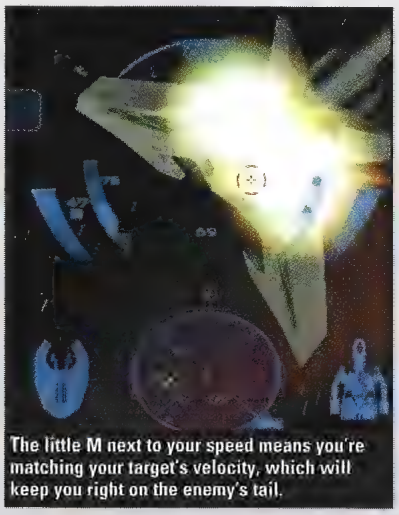


As the GTA acquires new weapons and other technology, you'll be briefed between missions. You should take the time to check out the new stuff in the Tech Room.

When you're the aggressor, be judicious with your use of speed matching. The computers in your ships constantly adjust your speed to match your targets once the Match Speed function is invoked with the M key. That stays on until you turn it off or, if you're worth your salt, until you take out the enemy ship. This Match Speed capability is the most useful combat control that's ever appeared in a space fighter.

Of course, some enemy ships will be faster than yours and you won't be able to match their speed. In that case, use your afterburner by pressing and holding the TAB key to catch up. Let off as you approach though, since it's easy to overshoot 'em and let 'em get on your tail.

Use missiles when you need a quick kill, otherwise, try to stick to lasers. If you find yourself heavily damaged or outnumbered, you'll be glad you saved the heavy weapons. Don't ever rely on being able to rearm. It's great if you can do it, but it's not always convenient.



The little M next to your speed means you're matching your target's velocity, which will keep you right on the enemy's tail.

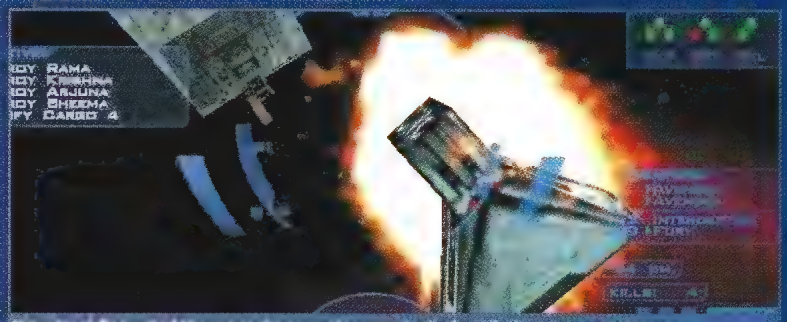
ESCORTING

Never stray too far from a ship that you are supposed to be protecting, even if the enemy warps in far away. Try to intercept the enemy at about 1500 clicks from the ship you're defending. That way, you're far enough away to prevent them from damaging it, but you're not too far away to get back quickly.

If you've got a lot of support, don't overuse the 'Protect my target' order.

Shell Game

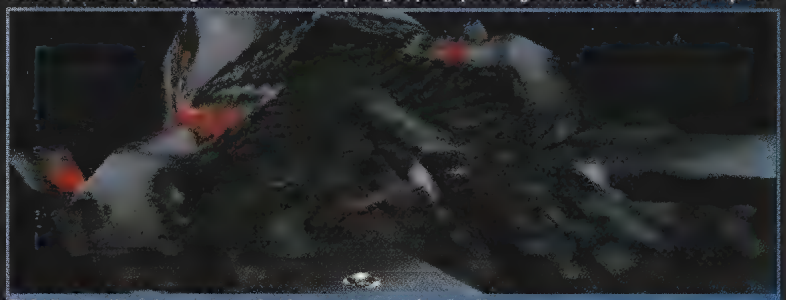
You receive your orders immediately after the last mission. You must investigate the Shivan destroyer *Eva*. Guess what... things don't go as planned. The *Eva* jumps out at the start of the mission, leaving some cargo containers. You receive orders to secure them, and suddenly the area is swarming with enemy ships so take them out. At the end of the mission, friendly transports will warp in to collect the cargo containers. Keep your distance since two of them are rigged and will explode when the transports dock.



It's a trap! Get out of the way when your transports dock with the cargo containers.

Playing Judas

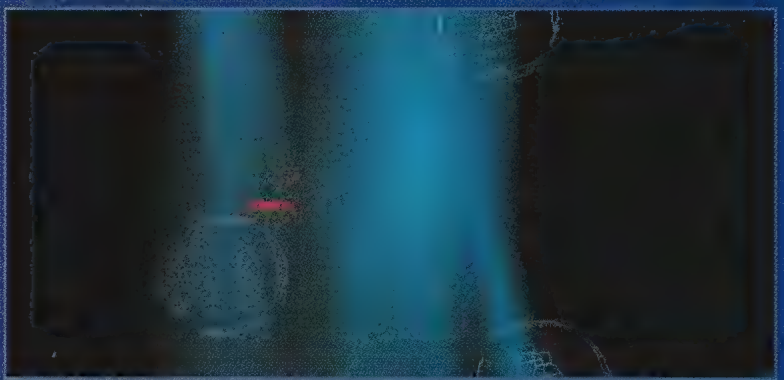
You're flying a captured Shivan fighter on a scouting mission. Your warp drive won't work until the end, so if you end up in a head-on engagement, you're dead. You need to scan enemy vessels as they warp in. There are three enemy patrols that you need to keep away from so observe their routes. As you proceed to scan ships as ordered, use the targeting hot keys often to monitor the enemy patrols. Be prepared to run like hell when the *Lucifer* arrives. You'll be ordered to try to get into its fighter bay, but that won't be possible. Just scan it and get out of there. You'll probably be discovered before your warp drive goes online. Don't try to fight; just try not to get killed until you can warp out!



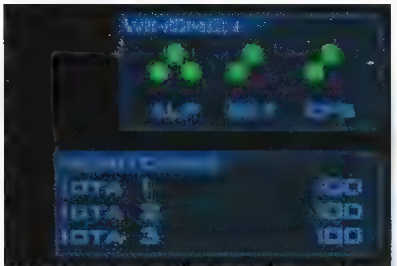
This is your first chance to get in close to the massive *Lucifer*.

Exodus

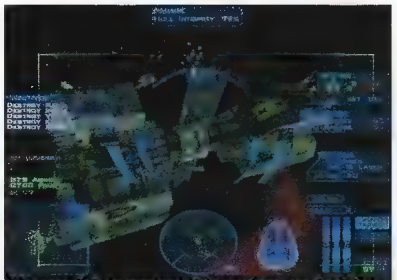
Three jump nodes form a triangle at the locale for this mission. Stay in the middle as the Vasudan ships warp in at one node and make their way to warp out at another. Use your afterburner to intercept enemy ships as they warp in and dispense them as quickly as possible.



Stay in the middle of those jump nodes and take out the enemies as they warp in.



Not only can you monitor your wingmen at a glance, but you can also monitor ships you choose in the escort list.



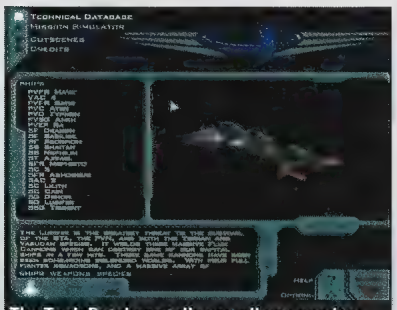
It's your job to protect this cruiser, so don't let it out of your sight.

That works fine if the ship you're escorting is small, like an escape pod or a cargo container, but for larger ships, assign your fighters to specific enemies. Avoid allowing them to congregate on one side of the friendly cap ship while an enemy warps in on the unprotected side.

ATTACKING CAPITAL SHIPS

When you're going in against a cap ship, don't make a beeline straight towards them — the turrets will make short work of you if you do. Zigzag around a bit to keep them from tracking you until you get in close. Use the turret targeting keys to learn where the danger is. If it's possible, have the cap ship disarmed before you go for the throat. If not, use the superstructure against it. A lot of times you can hide from a turret by getting some other jutting feature in between you and the offending turret. Hold your position relative to the cap ship and fire on whatever subsystem you're trying to knock out. Don't get too cozy in your little nook though - keep an eye on enemy fighters.

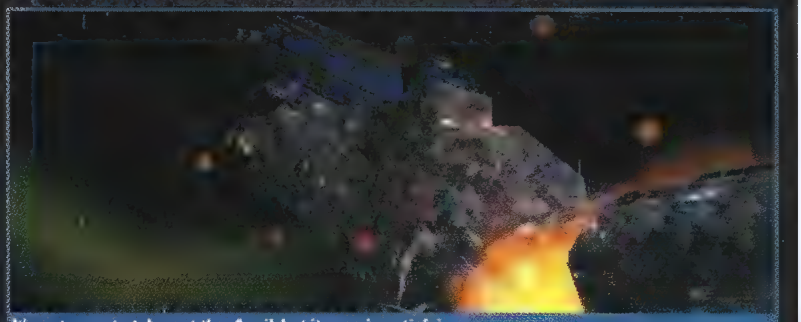
Use the ships under your command to your advantage. Have some engage enemy fighters, while others take out turrets and subsystems on the cap ship.



The Tech Database tells you all you need to know about ships, weapons and more.

Black Omega

This is a toughie. It's your job to see to the safety of two transports, Omega 1 and 2, and the best way to do that is to take out a capital ship called the *Anvil*. Have Alpha wing form on your wing and head for the *Anvil*. You'll need to get a quick start because you have to reload your Tsunami bombs a couple of times. Have Beta wing cover you, and instruct Gamma to protect one of the Omegas. As long as one of them makes it, your mission is accomplished. Keep pounding away at the *Anvil*. You don't have time to go for the turrets first, so be careful.



It's not easy to take out the *Anvil*, but it sure is satisfying.

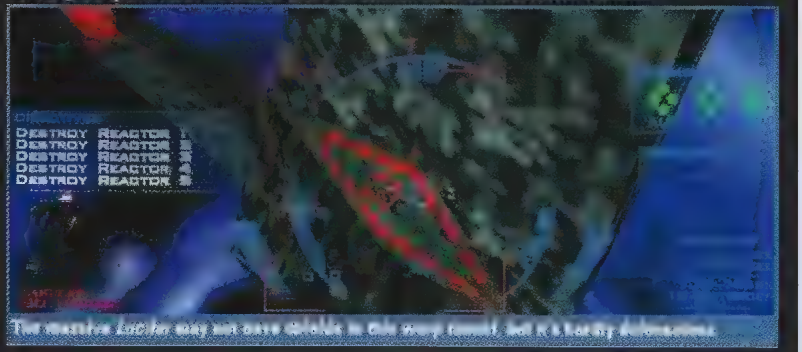
The Great Hunt

Outfit yourself with a bomber and load up on Tsunami or Harbinger bombs. You'll need them for the next mission. The *Bastion* won't make it to the jump node to take on the *Lucifer* so don't wait for it. Issue a "Form on my wing" order to all fighters, and take off for the jump node. Devote only enough time to thwarting the fighters as you need to, then make for the jump node again. An enemy capital ship will warp in between your ships and the node, but don't engage it! Turn 90 degrees upward and hit the afterburner. When you've got a clear path to the jump node, head for it. Keep issuing "Form on my wing" orders throughout this mission.

You and your posse must make it to that jump node at all costs.

Lucifer

Have every wing except Delta engage the fighters. Assign each ship in Delta a different reactor to take out, saving one for yourself. Start chipping away at your reactor. Since there's a 30-second wait after launching a bomb until you can fire another one, you'll have time to deal with any enemy fighters. Don't ignore them; you don't have shields in this warp tunnel. As Delta ships finish off their reactors, have them come and help you. Get in close; don't worry about getting out of the way of the blast when the *Lucifer* goes up since that's taken care of in a cut scene after the last reactor is blown.



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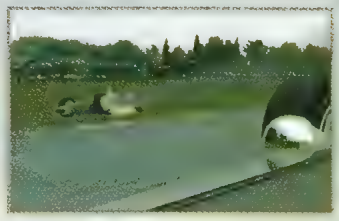

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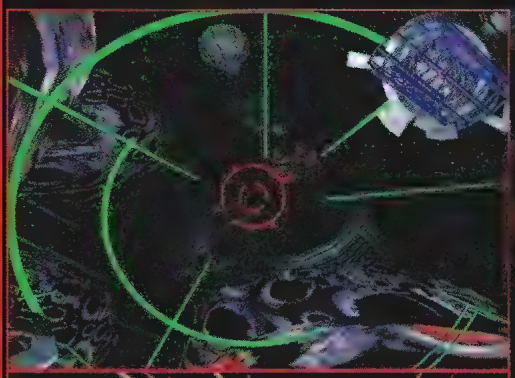
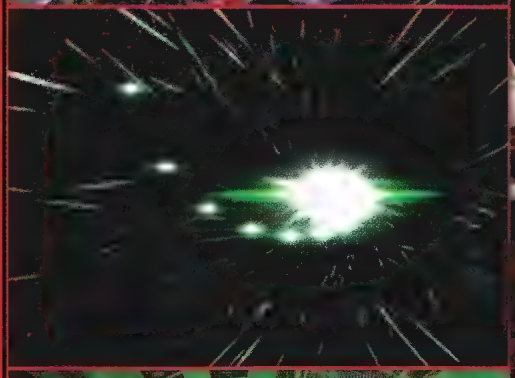
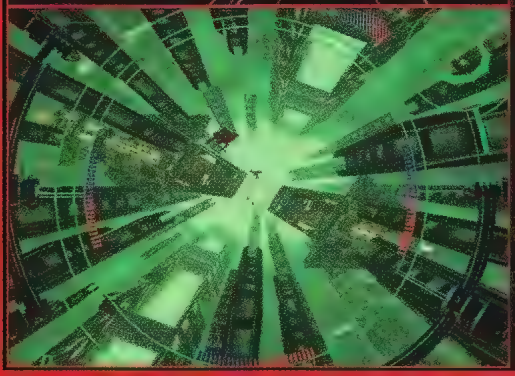
Dead Reckoning is massive multi-player fun to the last drop

Who spiked







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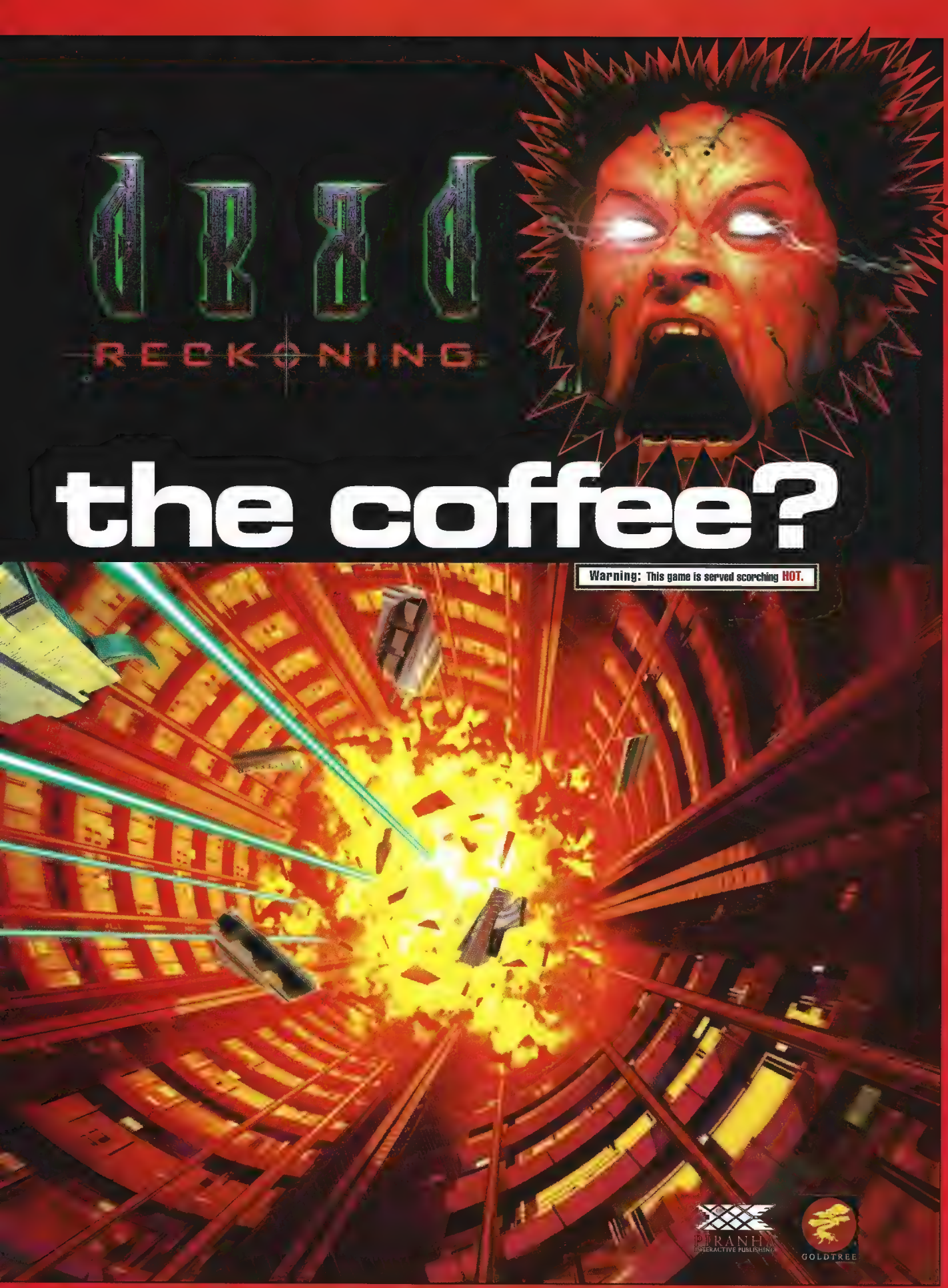

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Unreal, Part 2

The Strategy Central Crew comes to the rescue again!

Last month, we explained how to get through the first eight levels of Epic MegaGames's killer first-person shooter. We're back with part two this month, which takes you all the way from Level Nine to Level 29 (Whew!). Be sure to tune in next month for the exciting conclusion!

Harobed Village

LEVEL 9

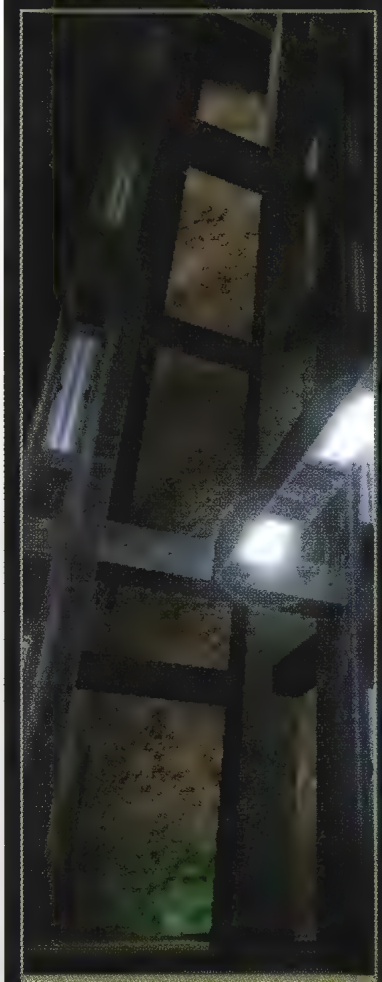
Ahh, here we are in a quaint Nali village — can't you tell by the smell of the rotting corpses? Take a left into the lovely little town and scour the three buildings for goodies, watching out for the killer 'skeeters inside. Raid the church if you're hungry for an assault vest. Head out the way you came, then continue until you find the crashed ship. Kill the Skaarj waiting for you on the docks. Make your way up the wreckage, then hop onto the wooden platform. Nuke the Skaarj, then round the corner and move on to the next level.

Mmm... pretty lensflare effects. You're going to have to battle your way through this metallic waste factory/atrium.

This quaint Nali temple holds several goodies inside, but watch out for Mr. Skaarj on the roof.

Terraniux Underground

LEVEL 10



This is the main elevator you'll ride to get to the Terraniux level.

Grab the ammo stashed next to the green barrel. Punch the pink symbol, then turn around and blast the enemy who comes down the elevator. Go through the dark doorway, then walk through the funky glowing hallway. Hit both pink buttons, and the room will change to a blue tint. Head back to the room with the elevator, then hop on. Walk through the doors and kill the fellow waiting for you. There are holes in the floor to the left and the right — snipe off the Skaarj with the Eightball gun. Jump down into the room to the right. Take the toxin suit, then follow the passageway until you get to a larger room with an electrical shield in front of a control room (no, you can't get in yet — but remember its location). Dive into the sludge, and kill the serpent. Head back to the control room on the right, then enter the pink doors and hit the pink button. The game will load — get ready for one of the most confusing and irritating levels in the entire game.

Terraniux

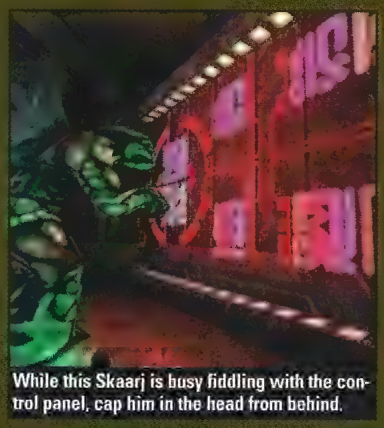
LEVEL 11

Ah-ha, the sludge has been drained! Now, remember the glowing electrical field in front of the control room? Head back in that direction. Jump down, and go through the newly unlocked door. Kill the serpent who tries to ambush you. Hang a right up the ramp, then ambush the serpent waiting for you at the bottom of the following ramp. Hang a right into the dark tunnel. There's a nonde-script elevator to your right — hop on, then search behind the metal wall for some extra goodies. Kill both Skaarj, then hit the pink button. Keep walking until you see some stairs that are under a pulsating red light. Climb them. Walk through the hub until you see a glowing red archway with some sludge inside. Enter, and kill the Skaarj. Jump onto the stone platform and hit the pink button. Head back to the hub, then hang a right and walk until you see an archway on the right with some pink lettering above it. Go inside and hit the pink button. Now, take a left, walk through the sliding doors, and you'll find an opening with some sludge to the left. Step on the grille, and you'll be taken up a level. To your left and right is an arboretum. Make your way through the hallways until the walls drop, then ride the elevator that's been revealed, and walk forward into the center hub. On the ground below are several C-shaped elevators with pink buttons on them — step on them and ride the whole way up. You'll now be on a cross-shaped platform with a dispersion pistol powerup in the middle. Three of the spokes lead to ammo and armor, and another leads to a window where you can see your next destination.

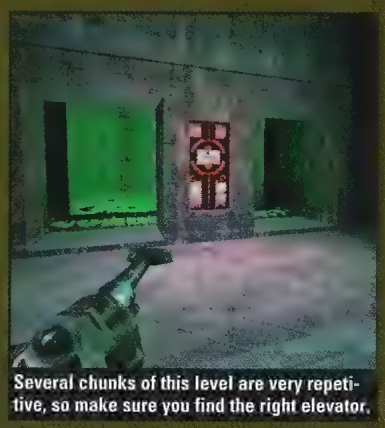
Drop back into the center of the hub. Facing the door with the multicolored writing on it, hang a left and walk through the sliding door. The walls will drop, then head to the left until you get to an elevator. It is crucial that you remember the elevator's location! Ride it up, kill the Skaarj inside, then hop into the water. Go into the tunnel below and to the right, and follow it until you get to the control room. Kill the Skaarj, then hit both pink buttons and take the biorifle. The lift to Noork's Elbow will be activated and the security locks will be turned off.

Remember the elevator in the arboretum you were supposed to remember? Head back there, then hang a right through a newly opened hallway. Walk through. On the left side of the room will be a purple doorway leading out of the level.

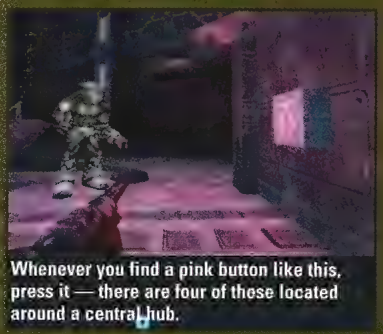
The room behind the electrical field is your main destination in the two Terraniux maps.



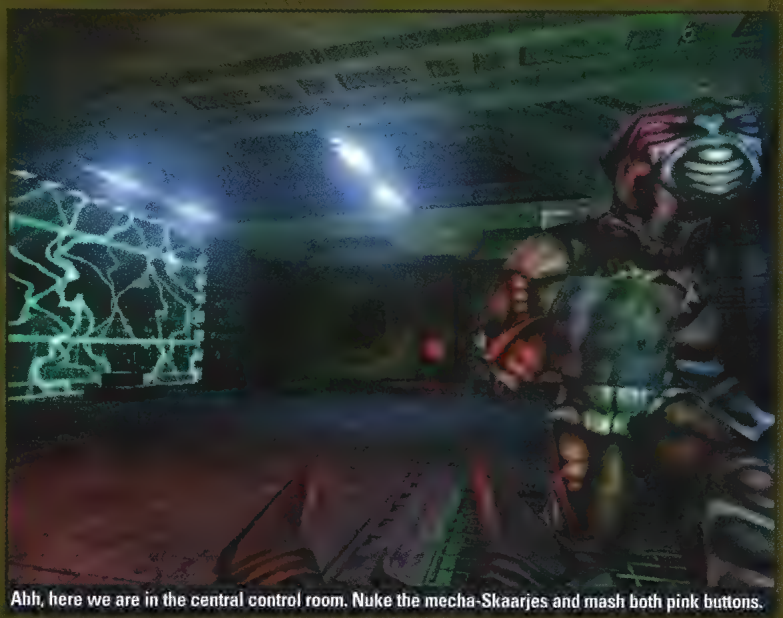
While this Skaarj is busy fiddling with the control panel, cap him in the head from behind.



Several chunks of this level are very repetitive, so make sure you find the right elevator.



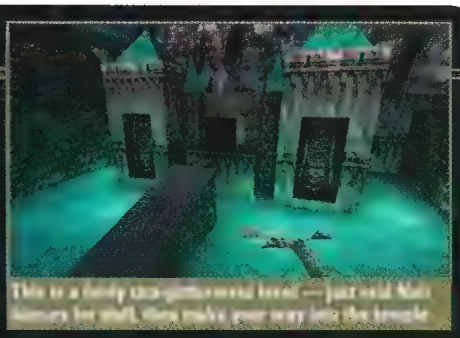
Whenever you find a pink button like this, press it — there are four of these located around a central hub.



Ahh, here we are in the central control room. Nuke the mecha-Skaarjes and mash both pink buttons.

Noork's Elbow

LEVEL 12

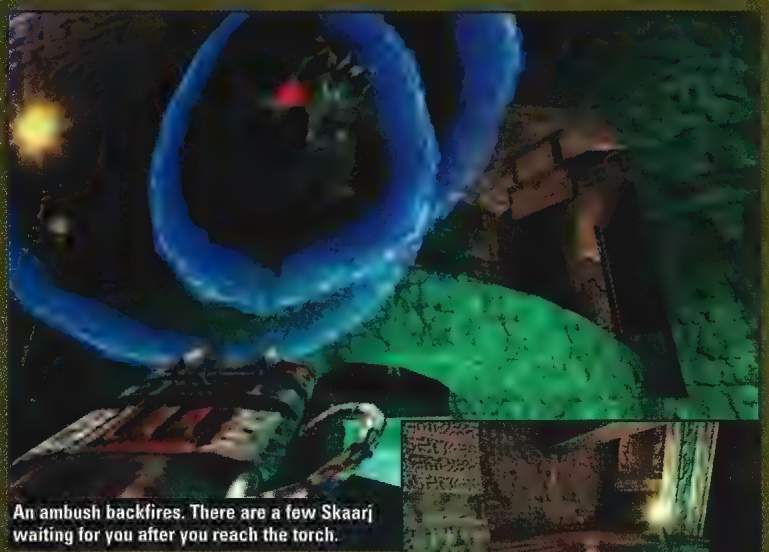


This is a fairly straightforward level — just avoid Nali farmers for start, then make your way into the temple

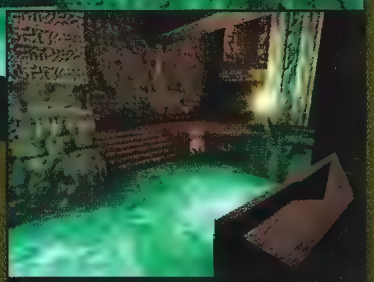
Wasn't that tedious? Don't worry — this map isn't nearly as bad. Head down the stone ramps, killing the Skaarj who will try to attack you. The buildings to your left contain a few crucified Nali and giant bugs. Keep following the path until you get to a castle. Go up the ramp and wait for the drawbridge to lower. Go through the door on the left.

Temple of Vandora

LEVEL 13

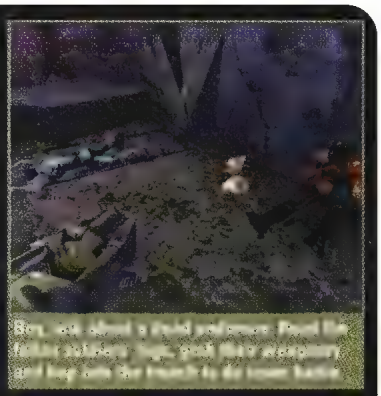


An ambush backfires. There are a few Skaarj waiting for you after you reach the torch.



Good news — this boat will take you to the sacred Torch of Tranquility. Light that sucker, and a door will open.

Walk forward into the foyer, then take a left into the courtyard. Kill the Skaarj and his winged friend. Walk through the door into the orange hallway. Take a left, then go down the stairs. Follow the Nali, then kill the Skaarj. In the room with the arches, hang a right into the hallway with two lit torches. Through the open door to the right is a living quarters with some goodies, including a biorifle — load up on 'em. Go down the spiral staircase. Kill the Skaarj who pops out at you. To the left is another living quarters with armor. Keep going until you reach an underground river and a boat. Kill the Skaarj on the balcony, then get into the boat. Some flying fat critters will try to ambush you. Once the boat stops, get out, and check out the important-looking structure — it's the Torch of Tranquility. Do a 180 and walk through the chapel, hitting the button at its front. Make your way up to the chapel's higher level. The doorway on the right will reveal a living quarters with ASMD cores. Head back the way you came, then step in front of the Torch of Tranquility to light it. Good job! Now hop into the water and dog-paddle your way back, being sure to kill the mutant fish who get in your way. Head up to the balcony overlook, and you'll find that the bars have been raised. Walk through. To your left are some living quarters. Keep moving forward and kill the Skaarj, then hit the button. Keep going straight up the stairs, and continue across the wooden bridge. Go through the passage to your right, read the writing on the wall with the translator, then continue up the stairs and through the chapel. You're back in the courtyard; hang a left, then a right, and go through the newly-opened door. Walk through the canyon, then proceed through the foreboding-looking archway. To your right is an elevator that you can't use yet; just go to the left and do battle with the second ferocious boss. Once you've finished beating him down, exit via the door in the back of the coliseum. D'oh, it's an earthquake! Anyway, hang a right and wait for the next level to load.

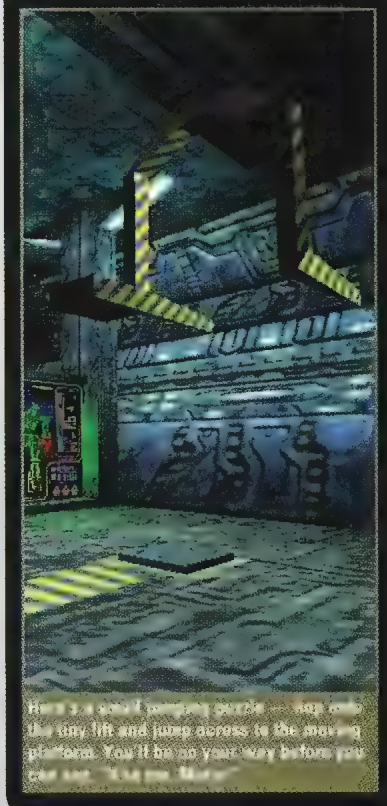


Boy, are almost a match performance. Read the fallen soldiers' logs, grab their weaponry and hop onto the trench to do some hunting

The Trench

LEVEL 14

As you start this level, notice the curious amount of weaponry presented to you (this is usually foreshadowing for a boss attack). Read the translator log, then hop up on the piece of rock. Those pesky floating eyeball beasts will come after you, so snipe 'em off. When you're ready, hop down and feed the boss some hot lead (or just run past him). Clear out the trench, the walk into the red light under the ISV Kran. Hop onto the platform, then jump inside the bay before you're crushed. Walk in front of the bio-suit monitor, then get on top of one of the mini-lifts. When the moving platform is activated, hop right on, then ride it over to the deck.



Here's a small jumping puzzle — hop onto the tiny lift and jump across to the moving platform. You'll be on your way before you can say, "I'd go Mario"

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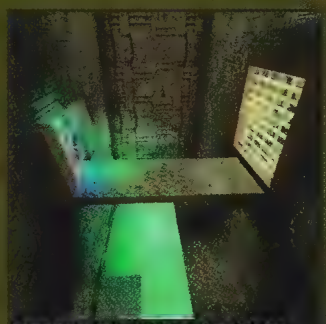
ISV-Kran Deck 4

LEVEL 15

Sneak up on this clueless Skaarj and give him a lesson in pain. Hit the button here, and a ramp will drop from overhead in the warehouse.

Ever see the movie *Alien*? Read the log of the fallen human — your objectives are to destroy the Gold Containment Cores, re-activate the engines, and get to the Deck 1 transporters without getting killed.

Hit the glowing control panel to activate the lift, then ride it. The following passageways are going to be absolutely infested with Skaarj — around eight of them will be jumping out at you, and it's best to be ready for a few scares. In the center of the hallway is a panel to the ventilation duct — drop through (though aim beforehand so you don't get hacked up by a fan), then make your way up the tiny elevator and follow the duct. You'll soon get to an outcropping, where you can see a small metal bridge above some engine coolant. Make a running jump and drop onto the bridge, then use the panel to open the locks. Make your way out through the metal grilles, then head back up to the dock and enter the blue doorway.

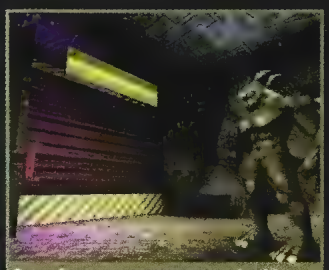


Drop onto this platform, then hit the control panel to open an auxiliary door.

You're now in a warehouse unit. Through the wall on the right is some ammo, while directly to the left is a lift leading up. Ignore the lift to the dock for now. Take the elevator up to the warehouse control room, and kill the Skaarj. Whack the control panel and a ramp will lower. Take the elevator back down and climb the ramp. Hit the panel, then get ready for four Skaarj to drop from the roof in sequence. Get out of there and enter the dock lift.

ISV-Kran Decks 3 and 2

LEVEL 16



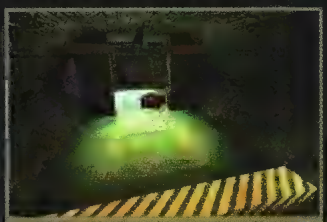
One of your numerous stops in this level is the Containment Field Generator room. Drop the fields, then you can nuke the engine's gold cores.

Head through the big door and kill the Skaarj waiting for you. Keep going forward through the second set of doors. Kill the Skaarj. Activate the lift and go through the door. Walk through, hang a left, and keep walking around the catwalk until you hit the panel, which will open the red blast doors. Walk through, and ride the lift up. Now, get ready for another "Kill eight billion Skaarj who keep popping out of the walls" sequence. When it's all over, raid the tunnels they emerged from – you'll find health and log files to read. Leave the bay area, then head back to the catwalks. Enter the first sealed door to the left, then find the door labeled Cooling System Control. Enter, then go through the doors on the right to activate the emergency drain valve and pump. Exit the room and walk across the room to another set of doors, and activate the drain valve.

Your next stop is the door marked Containment Field Generator. Go through, and activate all the panels to read about the containment fields sapping the gold cores. There's an orange-tinted door to the left of this room — go through, and use the lift. Don't get off at the bottom! Instead, get off at the second level. Walk forward, walk across the metal tubes, and keep going until you reach a grille catwalk. Go to the right, and you'll find a gold core. Stand back — WAY back — and fire an explosive weapon into it. Repeat with the gold core on the opposite side. You may now leave the Containment Field Generator area.

Your next stop is Engine Power Core Control. Ride the lift up, kill all monsters within, then examine each of the panels for important info. Ride the lift up to the next level, follow the catwalk to the coolant room. Hit both panels, and head back downstairs. You'll see a small blue sliding door on the opposite side of the room — go through, follow the catwalks, and check out the biosuits within. Exit the Power Core Control area.

Now, locate the Primary Turbolift area. Take either of the lifts up, and walk through the door. Game over, man, game over!



Spilled engine coolant can spell death for the unprepared — you'll have to drain this mess before proceeding.

The Cooling System control room will let you drain the spilled coolant on the dock deck.

Vengeance

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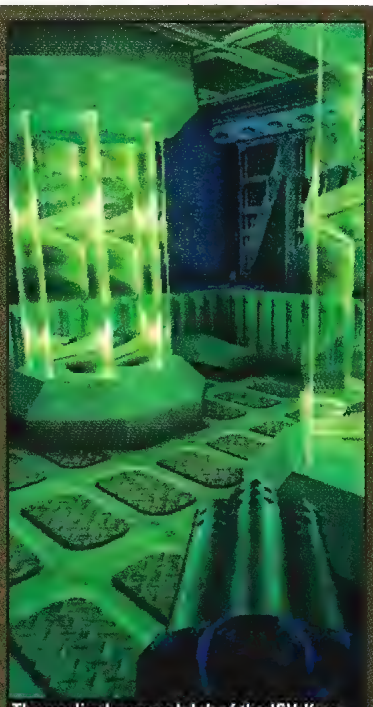
ISV-Kran Deck 1

LEVEL 17

Read the captain's logs on the side of the hallway. Twenty Skaarj still remain, and you're the man who's gotta kill 'em all. Run through the halls and systematically turn off the generators in the three rooms. Now you can enter the Science Research Lab. You can't get into the actual lab yet — so walk around it until you get to the sign marked Bridge, then turn around, blow up the boxes in your way, and follow the metal path to a control panel. Use it. Enter the lab. Read about the amoeba specimens, then smack the control panel to let the little buggers go. Kill 'em all, then wait 30 seconds for the lab doors to open. Don't forget to open the doors to the crew berths from inside the lab, too.

Enter the crew berths, using flares or flashlights to light your path, being cautious of any leftover Skaarj. Go through the large doors at the end of the berths hallway, and ride the lift to the observation deck. Hop into the water, and enter the grille. Dive down and turn off the bridge forcefield. Make your way back to the bridge area, then hit the button on either side of the chairs. Hop into the hole, then take a running jump onto the transporter pad. You are outta here!



The medical research lab of the ISV-Kran features weird amoeba thingies. Nuke 'em!

Take the bridge, number one! After you've turned off the bridge force field, enter the bridge and hit the button to your left, drop into the teleporter room, and you're outta here.

Spire Village

LEVEL 18

Out of the frying pan, and into the fire — now you're in a quaint little Nali village, with a Titan running loose in the middle of it. Kill him (or just outrun him), then raid the Nali houses for extra-special power-ups. Make your way along the canyon until you find another house, with yet another damn Titan in front of it. Outrun him, if you wish, then kill the guard in front of the gate (be careful — he's got a Razorjack!). Stand underneath the lock, and jump to activate the door.

Hope

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Sunspire

LEVEL 19

Snipe off the two guards walking for you along the path to the mountain, then make your way across the rope bridge. Open the door, but hold back for a second — a guard will come dropping through the ceiling. Waste his ass. Remember that a bunch of the crates and vases in the Sunspire contain flares — and you'll need 'em. And don't forget that there's a buncha those ceiling-huggin' beasts, too, before you enter new territory, listen for the "argh" sound they make.

After you turn the switch in this room, a crystal will rise from below and give off some funky lighting effects.

Your first destination is the feast hall. At the Sunspire's main lobby, hang a right, and keep walking until you get to two elevators. Use the translator — the one on the right leads to the eatin place. Take it. Locate the door labeled Kitchens, then take the elevator up. You'll find a dead Nali on a table — keep going and take the elevator up. You'll be attacked by Nali bugs, so keep your eyes open. Keep walking past the wine cellar (don't break the barrels — bugs lie within), and you'll find two statues right next to a sign that reads Great Hall. Walk until you reach the sanctuary. Across from the altar and under the doorway is a switch — press it. The altar will raise up to reveal a minigun. Continue through the passage to your right and up the elevator. Be ready for the ceiling-hugger waiting for you.

After you hit the lever in the crystal room, this magical transport will drop from above. Fasten your safety belt!

Raid the alcove to the right for some health, then continue on up the next elevator. In the next room, take the elevator directly to your right. Kill the guard waiting for you. Take the next elevator up. After a long ascent, blow away the ceiling-hugger waiting for you, then break open the barrels for health. Continue through the hallway to your right until you get to a door labeled the Chamber of Crystals. Watch the crystal rise and enjoy the groovy light show, then book it down the corridor, climb the stone stairs, hang a right out the door at the top, and wait for the freaky wooden transport to drop from the sky. Hop in, and you're whisked away to the next level. Woo-hoo!

Gateway to Na Pali

LEVEL 20

After a lengthy trip with no in-flight movie, you arrive at the Gateway to Na Pali. Wait for the door to open, then cross the wooden bridge. Behind your wooden transport are some barrels, break 'em for clips and health. Grab the flares on the ground, then make your way up through the caves. Kill both guards, and see if you can let your weenie Nali friend live (you will probably save him, but he'll jump off the plank anyway). Grab the clips and the flashlight on the platform. Turn around, and head back the way you came — on the right, there's a door. Go through, follow the cave, and terminate the guard with extreme prejudice. Be careful when going up the makeshift bridge – if you stay on the actual tracks, you won't fall off.

Blast the guards when you get to the clearing. Jump into that cool, clear water and swim to the left, continuing under the waterfall. You'll find a green cave with a fallen soldier, and your brand-new friend, the sniper rifle. Grab that ammo, and practice using the secondary fire mode to zoom in and snipe off enemies' heads. You'll love yourself for it.

AAA. The sniper rifle room! This chap on the floor didn't turn out so hot by, but with your new [illegible] you'll deal with the enemy from afar.

The Gateway to Na Pali is beautiful but dangerous [illegible]. You just can't walk in there without getting bombarded by one of those [illegible] Skaarj.

Hit the switch (only once!), then swim back the way you came, killing the new guard waiting for you in the clearing. Keep swimming forward — if there are bars in your way, go back to the sniper rifle room and toss the switch again. Kill the ceiling beastie in the next room. Do not keep swimming forward, as you'll be tossed off a waterfall. If you turn around, you'll see a lamp-lit cave hallway right next to the river — enter it. Ride the elevator, but be ready for an ambush attack by a guard.

Follow the cave until you emerge outside. Follow the platforms back inside the caves, clearing out the guards with your minigun or what have you. Use caution after passing the wooden bridge, as there are two Razorjack-wielding guards waiting for you. Go through the door, take a right, and open the wooden door. Kill the Skaarj and go up the stairs. That's all from this level.

Terror

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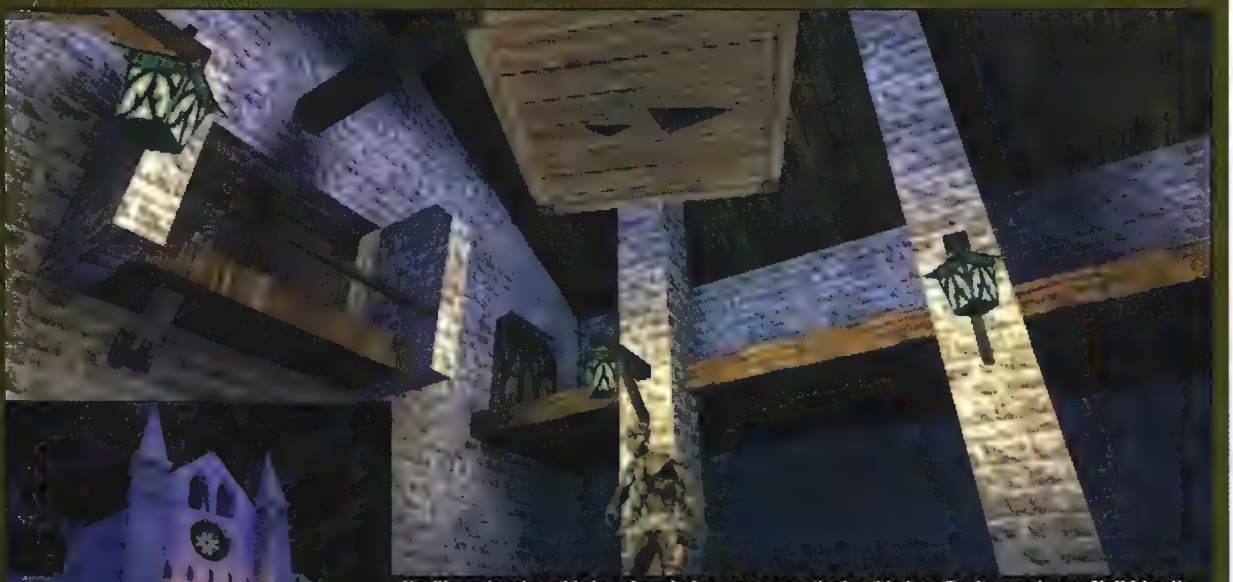
Na Pali Haven

LEVEL 21



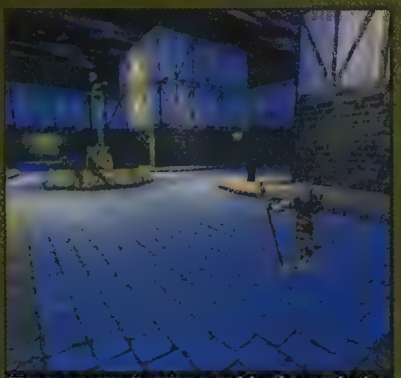
You'll need to drop this hanging platform to access the level below. Don't squash your Nali friend!

The basement of this Nali cathedral hides a Skaarj base. Get inside and let 'em have it.

Oooh! Here we are in lovely Na Pali, a floating vacation resort for only the swankiest Nali yuppies. The first thing we're going to do here is load up on health. Go up the stairs and out the door. Loop around the back of the barrow you just emerged from. Now, hop on it and climb up the angled roof. To your right is a treasure trove full of lovely Nali healing fruit. Take a running jump off the roof (this may take a few tries), then hurdle over the fence and eat hearty. Jump back over the fence to the beginning of the level, and continue past the barrow. When you get to the clearing, kill the guard, then go through the double doors to your right. Once inside, go through the arch to the left, and hit the switch. Turn around, and walk back to the main room. Now, go into the other hallway, and go through the doors. Walk under the wooden platform — there will be a wheel to the left — crank it, and go through the door that opens. Bust the barrels open for Nali fruit seeds, then go through the opened doors. Nuke the guard. To the left are ASMD cores, and to the right are AutoMag clips. Go into the next room, and clear it out. Head up the wooden ramp. Go into the next room and throw the switch.

Head back down to the courtyard. Walk up the wooden stairs to your left, and kill both guards. Go inside, and take the dispersion pistol powerup to the left of the bookcase. Kill the Skaarj in the room to the left, then head through the door. Make your way around the barn until you find the lever. Throw it, and the hanging wooden platform will drop.

Jump down into the new hole and take the sniper rifle. Be careful — before the next door will open, you'll have to kill a Skaarj who drops in. In the next room, loop around into the lit hallway, climb the ramp, and throw the switch. Go back downstairs, through the hallway, and shoot the crack in the wall. Nuke all the little spider-thingies. Go through the door in the back wall. Go up the wooden stairs in the next room, kill the guard and go up the stairs to your right. Kill the guard waiting around the corner to your right, then read the book on the table. Go through the doors and kill the Skaarj. Toss the switch. Go back downstairs and head outside — the metal door in front of the blue cobblestones is now open. Head through. To your right is the town square; admire the lovely Nali statue. Below and to your right are some barrels with AutoMag clips inside. Keep walking down the road, killing all the guards in your way. Keep walking past the locked doors to your left. Take a right down the stairs, ignore the door to your left, and hang a right around the corner. Kill the guards waiting for you, then descend into the pool area. Pick off the monster fish waiting for you. Walk through the underground tunnels until you see an orange-lit spot on the wall. Turn around. Aha, a crack in the wall! Shoot it with an explosive weapon, then walk through into the wine cellar. Kill the Skaarj, then enter the door on the far side of the room (don't bother breaking the wine barrels, as spider beasts are stuck inside). Head up the ramps and walk through the door, surprising the two guards playing a dice game. Do not go into the fireplace — bugs will drop from above. Instead, go through the open door into the next room, and go through the hallway to your right (the door to the left simply leads outside). Go up the dark stairs, then kill the Skaarj in the next room. Keep going until you're on the second floor of the bar. Walk across the wooden platform to the single door on the right, and toss the switch. Now, follow the wooden platform to the next two doors — the door on the right leads to a sleeping Skaarj. Kill him, break the glass, and jump out the window. Go into the open room to the right of the waterfall and toss the switch. Back out, then go through the door to your left. Jump over the fence, then enter the room to your right, killing the Skaarj. The barrels here hold rifle rounds. Go through the door. Read both control panels, then hit the green-lit button. Go up the elevator, and kill the Razorjack-wielding guard. Go through the futuristic doors, and hit the control panel. The underwater doors are now open! Head back to the elevator (the button to lower it is behind the column), then go back to the waterfall area. Underneath the waterfall is a pipe. Make sure your health is above 50, and swim through.



There are guards aplenty waiting for you in the square — tread lightly.

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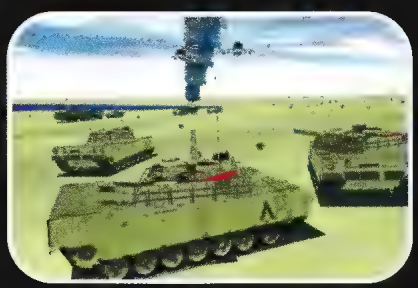

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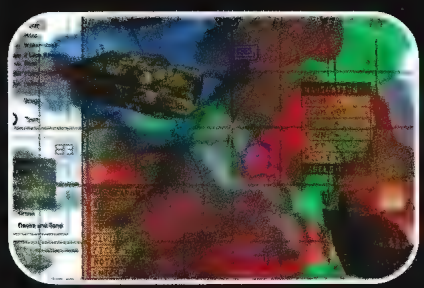

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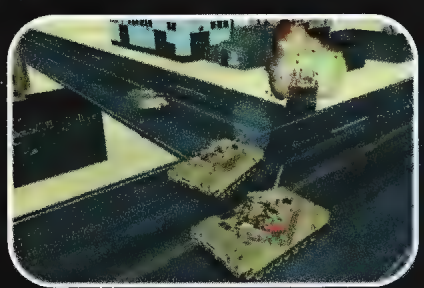

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Outpost 33

LEVEL 22

Okay, start swimming like mad — you're probably going to lose at least 20 points of health by the time you get to the end of the tunnel. Once you surface, blast the Skaarj. The only door unlocked is the one to the left of the large door with the control panel — go through, then ride the elevator. Follow the path, and go through the doors. Kill the guard, then hit the red panel once to open the bay doors. Go back to the main concourse and through the doors you opened. Kill the guard, then hit the green control panel to ride the elevator. Hit the green button on the left to open the door to the shuttle bay. See if you can snipe off the guard at the top of the catwalk, then hit the panel to lower the elevator. Walk across the catwalk and through the sliding doors until you get to a control room. Hit all three panels exactly once. Go back to the shuttle bay, and go through the door to your left. Eliminate all Skaarj resistance in the following hallway. Keep walking until you find another elevator — hit the green panel and go down into the generator room with the funky green forcefield. Hit the green switch and go through the door, once again eliminating the Skaarj in your path. You'll eventually reach a cathedral of sorts. Walk around until you get to the entrance. Kill the guards in the sanctuary.

Underneath the arches to the right, and back a few feet, are a set of doors (use the flashlight or flares if you can't see it). Go through and up the spiral staircase. Gawk at the forcefield. Keep going up the stairs, and exit to the balcony. Directly in front of you is a brick that's out of place; press it. Now, continue past the stone carving of the crucified Nali, and go through the hall to your left. Get on the wooden lift, and you'll be taken to a room with an Eightball launcher. Break the statues by pushing them out the windows, and you'll gain a health powerup and shield belt down at the entrance. Go down the lift to the balcony, and continue forward through the wooden doors. Kill the guard, and hit the red control panel. Go back downstairs to the sanctuary, but this time, go under the arches to your left, and hit the green panel. Go down the stairs. There's a tiny alcove with some biorifle ammo and some barrels — don't break these, as spiders will hop out. Go through the catacombs until you reach a large steel door. Step close enough that it opens, then select the rifle. Zoom in on the Skaarj's head, and pop it off. Use the control panel he was tending to, and watch as the amazing green ball of luminescent stuff emerges in the center of the room. Hop into the light.

While Bubba here acts all tough and beats his chest, hop onto his throne to raise the bridge. If you play your cards right...

He'll be dropping in for a one-way ticket straight to hell!

Velora Pass

LEVEL 23

Welcome to Velora Pass, where the skies have funky lighting and the action comes fast and furious. Follow the rocky passage until you get to a clearing with a large stone titan sitting on a throne.

Now, this is one of the few sequences in *Unreal* where you can cheese out a boss without losing a single point of health, so listen up. Grab the dispersion pistol powerup, and IMMEDIATELY run back to the titan's throne. He'll stand up, walk a few feet, and beat his chest. While he is doing this, hop onto the throne to trigger a stone switch. Now, run back to the level's entrance, and wait for around thirty seconds.

Now it gets tricky. Go back to the arena, and sprint past the titan, and cross the bridge. Strafe left and right to avoid getting hit by his stone projectiles. When he steps onto the bridge, throw the switch on the right pillar to drop it out from under him. Laugh maniacally as he plummets into a lava pit. Continue down the pass and through the door.

Bluff Eversmoking

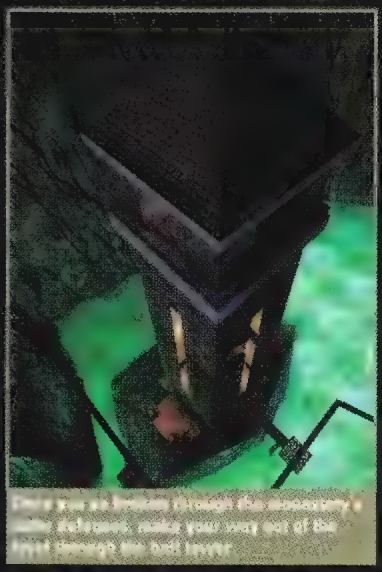
LEVEL 24

It's time to head into *Unreal*'s wacky medieval maps, so toss the switch to the right to open the wooden doors. Why, it's a friendly Nali! He'll show you to a Stinger, open a door, then lead you up a wooden path to a drawbridge. Head on in.

There are a few cool things to do in the monastery, but none are really necessary — if you want to cut to the chase, go to the next paragraph. The front doors to the monastery are locked, so go through the opening to the left. Kill both guards, and proceed through the next arch. Behind the monastery is a graveyard with some Nali healing fruit — if you're in need of health, grab it, but our next stop is the pool to the right. Jump in, swim through the pipe, down the hole, then up into the catacombs for a few extra goodies. Head back up to the front of the monastery when you're done exploring.

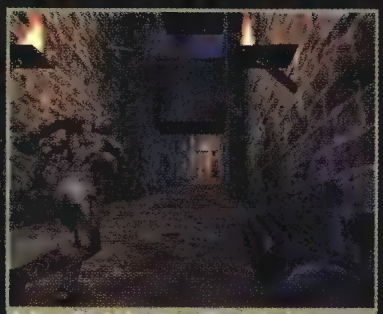
Facing the front of the monastery, you can see a small path down and to the left. Follow it. You'll wind up in an underground tunnel complex — take either of the two doors, then drop down into the large, torchlit room. Read the two journals in the alcove to the right, then enter the hallway nearest to the alcove. Get the drop on the three guards playing dice. We'll refer to this as the Dice Room — remember its location. Toss the switch to your left, then read the three journals. To your left are stairs — hop into the water to the right of them, then swim through the tunnels and up until you get to a hidden chamber. Read the three journals inside. Now, look back down in the water — you'll see a cross at the bottom. Jump in, and go in the direction of the cross. Swim straight up, and you'll come out of a well in the inner monastery.

Walk forward and underneath the stairs. Duck into the alcove underneath the sign, and toss the switch. A lift will lower. Once it comes all the way down, hit the switch again and jump on the lift. Hit both switches in the tower, then go back downstairs. Walk past the large metal and wood doors to the sanctuary on your right, and into an area with some boxes pilfered from the ISV-Kran. Go down the stairway, and follow the hallway until you find a switch. Ignore it, but hop on the wooden support behind the switch. Inch across the ledge, then jump down into the control area. Hit the panel. You now have access to the hydroelectric generator.



Once you are finished in the monastery, exit through the front doors, making your way out of the front passage and into the bell tower.

Head back to the front of the monastery, and take the path down to the Dice Room. Once you get there, take a left (past the first hallway), and jump into the water. Work your way through the pipe systems until you're dropped into the caves. Kill the three or so guards waiting for you, then head up the ramps for a few goodies. Go back down the ramps and though the door in the rock. Take a left into the hallway, then hit the switch in the chandelier room. Ride the wooden platform down, then snipe off the guard in the distance. Take the sniper rifle, then break the boxes for rounds. Walk down the hallway, sniping the rest of the guards as you go. Climb the spiral staircase. Walk forward into the large room, and hit both control panels. Go through the ventilation duct at the end of the room. Take the elevator up, then walk up the ramp to the bell tower. Throw the switch and step on the elevator. Throw both circuit breakers. Take the elevator back down, but hop off at the second level just before you reach the bottom. Go through the small opening onto the platform. When your ride comes to a full stop, walk through the tunnels and go down the elevator.



Follow the Nali's advice! Head on to Eightball and find out what they're good for. They're going to help.

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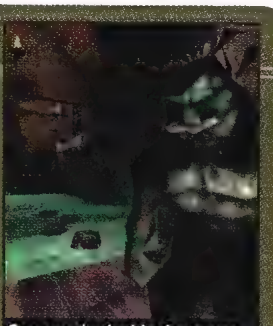
Dasa Mountain Pass

LEVEL 25

Here's a quick and painless level. Open the doors and snipe off the guard. Walk down the hall. Before you get to the door, go behind the crates to the left, and throw the switch below the torch. Go through the doors and follow the path. Break the barrels for AutoMag clips. Snipe off the guards across the chasm, then use the crank next to the drawbridge. Cross the bridge, then go through the hallway to your left. Break the barrels in the next room for AutoMag clips and an Eightball gun. Smash the glass and hop through the window into the next room. Break the crates for an assault vest. Go back the way you came to the drawbridge. Carefully walk down the wooden plank to the right of the drawbridge, then drop down to the orange ledge. Load up on Nali healing fruit. Dive through the hole in the bottom of the pool. Swim to the next room. Turn the crank. Kill the guards who come down on the elevator. Push a barrel close to the pool, then use it as a stepping stone to hop on the elevator. Throw the switch at the top. Now drop down and go through the door you just opened. In the courtyard, go through the door to the left. Kill the brute. Throw the switch, head back to the courtyard, and go through the newly opened door. Go into the building, and kill the Skaarj waiting to ambush you to the left. Ignore the guards that are trying to snipe you off, and swim forward and go up the stairs. A door will open. Go in.

Make your way through the series of gates, and you'll be on your way to the next level.



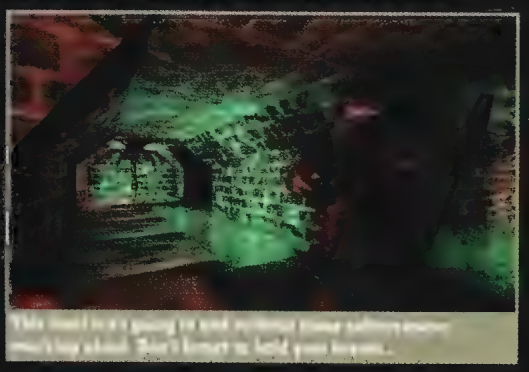
Once you're inside the tower at Dasa Mountain, you'll have to contend with a Skaarj and several guards who will try to snipe you off.

Cellars at Dasa Pass

LEVEL 26

Walk through the hall to the left. Climb up the plank and turn the lever. If you jump into the water, kill the fish and follow the passage; you will emerge in a secret room with some ceiling-huggers and a health powerup. Head back to the main hub, and the bars will have raised at the door to your left. Kill both guards. Go up the elevator to your right, and turn the wheel. Walk through the doors that have just opened. Go through the door in the hallway to your left, kill the guard, and turn the large crank. Head back to the hallway, and go through the doors that have just opened. Go forward until you get to a T intersection. Break the barrels on the right, then head down the hall and up the spiral staircase. Don't worry — you don't have to kill the stone titan. Just hit the displaced brick on the stone hub, and go through the secret door that opens. Go up the spiral staircase, and walk across the wooden ledge. You'll be able to see a small ledge in the wall — hop down in there, and hit the stone button. Jump down and exit the way you came in. Go down the staircase. To your left is a hallway with a lever — go through and trigger it. Turn around and walk until you see two wooden doors to your right. Go through the second door. Go upstairs and kill the mecha-Skaarj. Take a left and throw the dual switches. Turn around, walk down the hall, and you'll see an elevator drop down. Kill the Skaarj inside, then ride it up to the next level. Hit the button at the end of the room. Drop down into the pool, but be wary of the killer fishies inside. Use the lever at the bottom of the pool. Go back up and take the health pack.

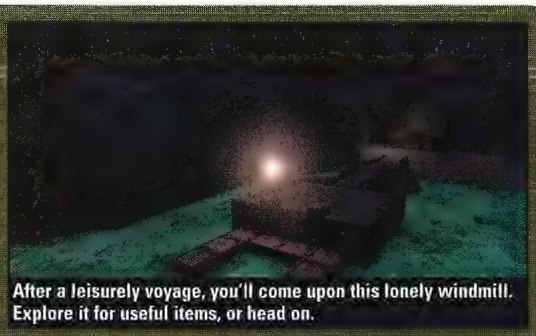
Go back the way you came. Go down the staircase, through the door, then go through the door directly in front of you. Hang a left, walk a few feet, and you'll see a door to the right. Head inside. There's a pool to the left with some Nali healing fruit, but keep going down the stairwell to the right. Kill a few guards, then go through the bars to the left. Take the elevator up, follow the passageway, and hit the lever. Jump down across the crates, and go out the way you came, up the spiral staircase. Go back to the pool at the top of the stairs, and hop in — one of the bars is missing. Inch your way through and kill the fish. Swim to the left until you see some wooden boards, then take a right. On the bottom of the pool, you'll see a white diamond in front of a hole. Take a deep breath, then swim down into it, and follow it until you get to a cave. Kill the ceiling-huggers, then throw the half-submerged switch. Head back through the underwater passage. Go back through the narrow passageway, and take a left (you're headed back to the start of the level). Pass through the door leading to the main hall. You'll see a white diamond on the floor in the hallway to your left. Walk through the metal doors. Walk down the passageway, throw the switch, and walk through the doors that open. Dash across the room (ignoring the guards — they'll keep respawning after you kill them), hit the metal switch, then turn around and go through the open door to your left. Turn the wheel, then hop onto one of the elevators that lower. Walk across the upper level until you find some stairs — climb them, then kill around a dozen guards in the next room (using God mode is cowardly, sure, but it's the only way to get past this). Walk through the next series of hallways, and kill the robo-Brutes in the next large room. Toss the switch. Ride the lift, then walk across the second level and throw the switch. Drop back down to the first level, and walk through the door that opened behind the elevator. Go down the stairs.



Serpant Canyon

LEVEL 27

Walk past the pool and through the door. Jump into the boat and snipe the rope. Take a nice, leisurely boat ride and listen to the cool vocals. Get off at the dock. Raid the windmill for goodies. Walk down the path into the cave. Geo, that was hard...



After a leisurely voyage, you'll come upon this lonely windmill. Explore it for useful items, or head on.

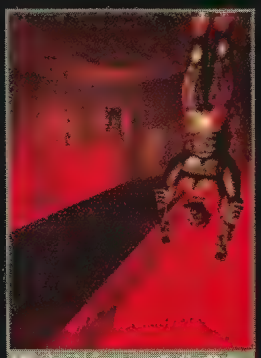
Nali Castle

LEVEL 28

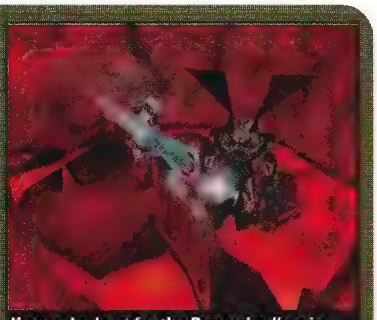
Well, we've arrived at *Unreal*'s tour de force, the famous castle level. Kill the floating creature, then take the ASMD waiting for you on the small island in the green pool (use the flashlight if you can't find it). Now, move back so you can see down the hallway to the castle. Whip out the sniper rifle and cap off the guard's head. It's very important that you kill him before he gets into the castle and lowers the drawbridge.

Walk into the castle and into the main hall. Kill the two guards. To the right of the ramp is a small door — go in. You'll see a Nali statue. Take a right into the library. Read the book. Exit, then jump down in front of the statue. Go around the statue into the chapel, kill the floating creatures, then hit the switch behind the altar. Do an about face. Go straight through the statue room, then hang a right into the library. Climb the ramp to your left, go through the hallway, and you'll find yourself at the main hall. Go up the ramp and through the door to the left. Go up the ramp and take a right, clearing out the hallway. The first door on your right should be a courtyard — go inside, then go up the ramp. Kill the guard and follow the Nali. He'll point you toward a supercharge and a shield belt. Go up the stairs, then take the elevator. Make your way up the spiral staircase. Once you reach the top, take the elevator.

Kill the ENORMOUS floating creature. Now, head all the way back to the large Nali statue, and hang a right. Go down the stairs and through the door, and kill the three guards and the Skaarj. You'll see two signs hanging over two doors — go through either of them into the dungeons. Kill the mecha-Skaarj below. Hit the button and go through the large door. Move down to the east and west wings, freeing the Nali if you like. From either wing, go down the ramp into the execution chamber. Walk past the large blade until you get to a red room with a bridge. Walk across into the next level.



[illegible] their laughable [illegible] back. They're sure good [illegible] through!



Keep a lookout for the Demonlord's missiles — they're on loan from the Canadian government (really!).

Demonlord's Lair

LEVEL 29

You're now in the lair of the second-to-last boss. Activate the crosshair, stand at the back of the tunnel leading to the red cave, and you can probably get in some cheap shots before he notices you — but once he does, keep moving. His missiles (which are marked with a Canadian flag and the word "Peacemaker") can put you in your place, so start dodgin'. After you beat him, go through the door that opens.

What do these Skaarj guys do all day? Do they just stand in one place, checking their weaponry repeatedly, until some heavily armored human from a crash-landed spaceship happens to wander their way?

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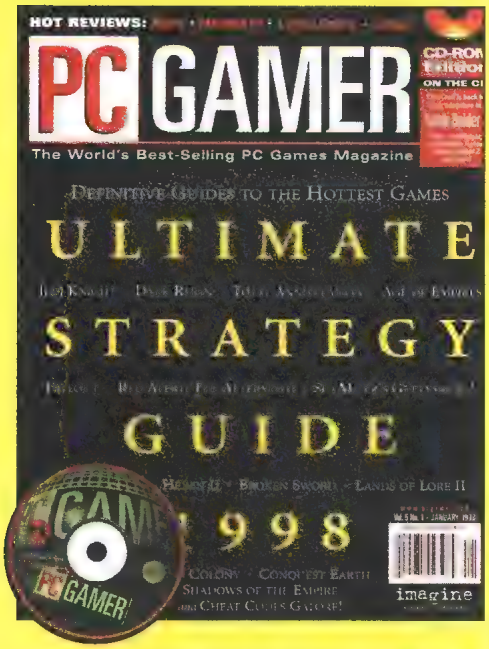

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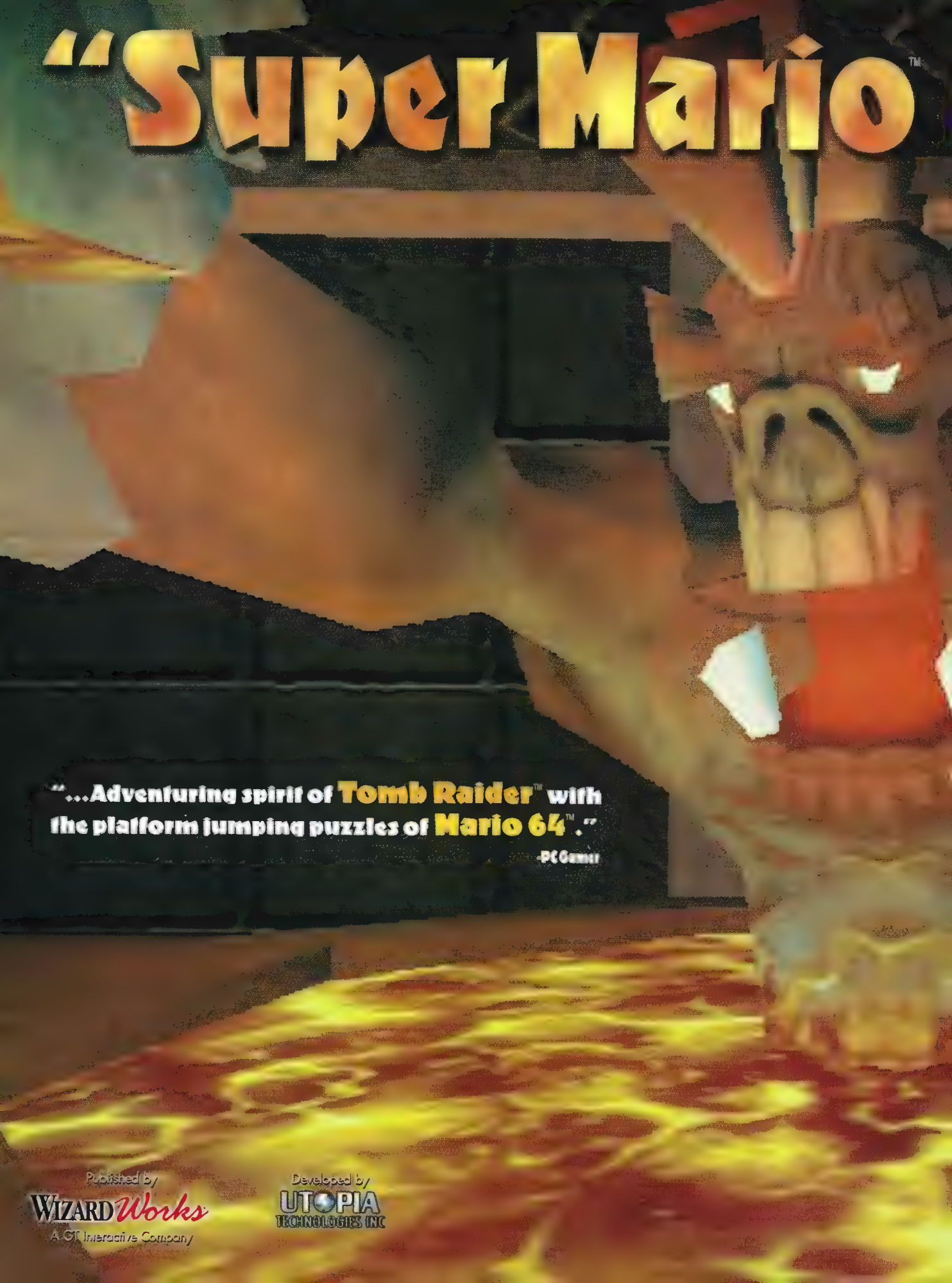
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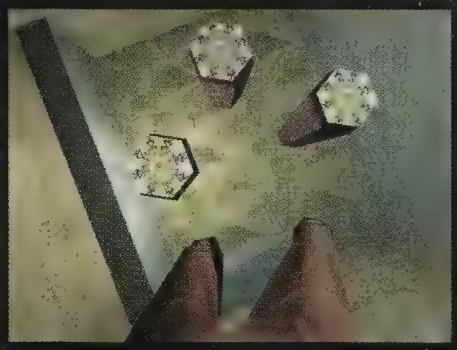

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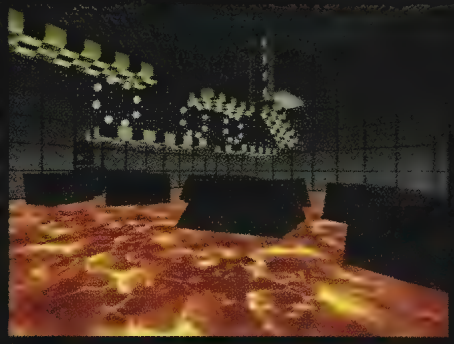

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Mech Commander, Part 1

Straight from the horse's mouth...

Mechs broken and burning, the enemy closing in from all sides, pilots wounded and dead... who can save you now? Nobody but FASA Interactive, the guys who designed and built the game! Fortunately they're on hand with this indispensable guide to the first campaign. More next month!

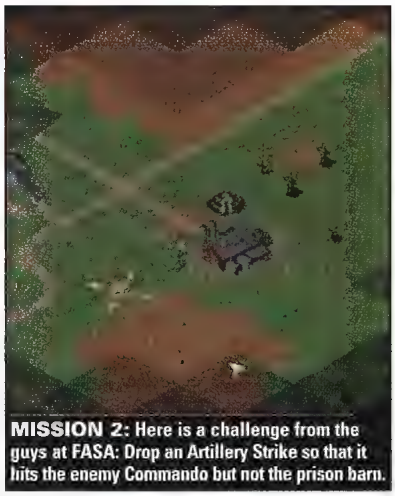
Early mission breakdowns contain more specific instructions than later breakdowns, under the assumption that the more missions you have under your belt, the better you'll be. These descriptions also represent the "bare minimum" win. Most missions have warehouses and supply containers that contain valuable salvage for you to recover. These sources of supply are largely ignored in these walkthroughs. Once you've mastered a mission, reload it and take some time out to look for the bonuses.

OP1 – Mission 1

MISSION: Liberate work camps Alpha and Beta and destroy the Garrison Base that controls the area.
LOADOUT: Take all three of the starting Mechs, and the three best pilots. Put the pilot with the best Gunnery Skill in the Firestarter. Optionally, strip the SRM Packs out of one of the Commandos and replace with as many LRM Racks as you can fit.
BATTLEPLAN: All the Mechs start in Force Group 1. If you have equipped a Commando with LRM Racks, place him in Force Group 2. Select all units and head northeast until you reach the road. Follow the road south. A group of armored combat cars is waiting ahead of you. Order your units to Attack from Medium Range and keep them moving (stationary targets are easier to hit). Once you've destroyed the cars, follow the road east into Camp Alpha (Objective #1). Destroy the turret at the entrance from Short Range. LET THE FUEL TRUCK ESCAPE. It is effectively a moving bomb and has better uses later. Now, select Force Group 1 and order them to attack the Natural Gas Tower and the Camp HQ.

Once done, quickly move your forces toward Objective #2. Use the Run command to get them moving. Approach the Base from the west. Advance slowly and destroy the turret guarding the base as soon as it comes into view. Now wait for the Fuel Truck. Let it enter the base ahead of you and follow at least four truck lengths behind. On sensors, you will see the enemy Commando begin moving toward you. As the Mech passes the fuel truck, go ahead and shoot the truck — Boom! Clean up the rest of the base by destroying the three Garrison Buildings.

MISSION 1: Be careful! Any of your units that are too close when the Natural Gas Tower blows up might get burned. Keep your units at a safe distance from the explosions.



MISSION 2: Here is a challenge from the guys at FASA: Drop an Artillery Strike so that it hits the enemy Commando but not the prison barn.

Head south-southeast until you reach a road. Follow it north through town. Stay on the road until you are southeast of Objective #3. Then, head northwest toward it. Advance slowly. As soon as the enemy Uller Mech guarding the Camp can be seen order all units to attack by clicking on the Uller. (Each pilot will find his optimal firing range.) Watch which of your Mechs the Uller fires on (probably the Firestarter with its PPC). Run the other two Mechs past the Uller to get in behind it. Continue this positioning until the Uller is dead. Destroy the Camp HQ building. Mission completed.

OP1 – Mission 2

MISSION: Rescue captured pilots being held in a makeshift prison barn. Battalion provides you with an APC to transport them. That APC must survive in order to win the mission.
LOADOUT: If you managed to salvage the Uller from the previous mission, field it. If not, repair and use the Mechs from Mission 1, except equip the Firestarter with all energy weapons.
BATTLEPLAN: Your units and the APC drop inside a forest. Use the Firestarter to burn the forest between you and the road, and then head south. Over time, enemy units leave a base to the north and head south. Destroy them as you encounter them and watch for enemy units sneaking up on you. Ahead on the road is an enemy hover tank. Chase it down by ordering your Firestarter to run ahead of it. Keep the other Mechs with the APC.

If you do not catch the hover tank on the road, it blocks the bridge ahead of you. Toast it when it stops. Cross the bridge quickly. Now, check you Tactical Map. If there's a red sensor contact (enemy unit) surrounded by circle (sensor radius) heading south, you've taken too long and an enemy Hollander II is coming to mess you up. If the Hollander II isn't there, order the Firestarter to destroy the bridge. If it is, there's no time to waste — use an Artillery Strike to take the bridge out.

Now, head south to an enemy field camp guarded by two tanks. There's also an enemy HQ Vehicle there that runs as

you approach. Send the Firestarter against the J. Edgar hover tank at Medium Range (where it out-ranges the tank) and the others against the Striker missile tank, maneuvering them as close as possible and within the Minimum Range of the tank's LRMs. Once the tanks are dead, chase down the HQ Vehicle and capture it.

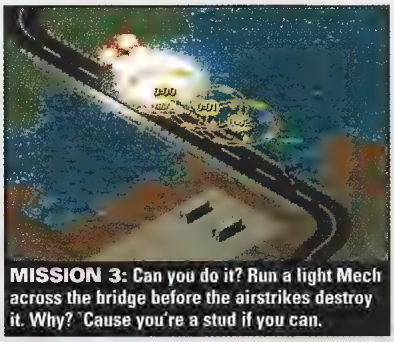
The Tactical Map now shows the location of the prison barn. Scroll the Battlefield view over to the barn and the two Commandos guarding it. Without hitting the barn, use Artillery to soften them up. Move your units up the road and then east to the barns. Approach the barns slowly. Lead with the Firestarter (for its PPC) or the captured Uller (for its armor). Engage the Commandos by flanking them like you did the Uller last mission. Watch the APC in case anything sneaks up.

Having destroyed the Commandos, use the APC to capture the barn. Head north-northeast to the extraction point. BEWARE! If you've taken too long, the Hollander II may have hooked around from the north. It'll use its Gauss Rifle at Long Range, so GET YOUR 'MECHS AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN (the Gauss Rifle has a Minimum Range too).

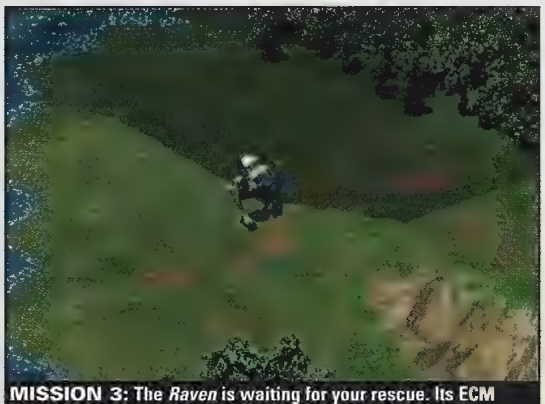
Getting the APC and your surviving Mechs into the extraction point ends the mission.

OP1 – Mission 3

MISSION: A friendly Raven ECM Mech has been caught behind enemy lines. Meet up with it and escort it to safety.
LOADOUT: If you play smart, firepower won't be the determining factor. If you like to fight everything (even though it's not required) make sure to pick up a Centurion out of Battalion Inventory.
BATTLEPLAN: From the drop point, head north along the road. Watch your sensors: there's a group of Harasser light tanks patrolling just north of a small fuel depot. Use the fuel tanks to destroy the tanks if you can. Cross the bridge and immediately swing due north. There is a hill there that, when climbed, gives you a commanding view of a large portion of the area. Drop some artillery on the pair of Commandos parked near a forest area. Then watch the nearby vehicle patrol patterns for a few moments and then run north-northwest when a hole opens. You may have to deal with some Striker missile tanks, but they shouldn't be a problem if you close up quickly with them. The Raven is on a small rise near the edge of the map and powers up as you approach.



MISSION 3: Can you do it? Run a light Mech across the bridge before the airstrikes destroy it. Why? 'Cause you're a stud if you can.



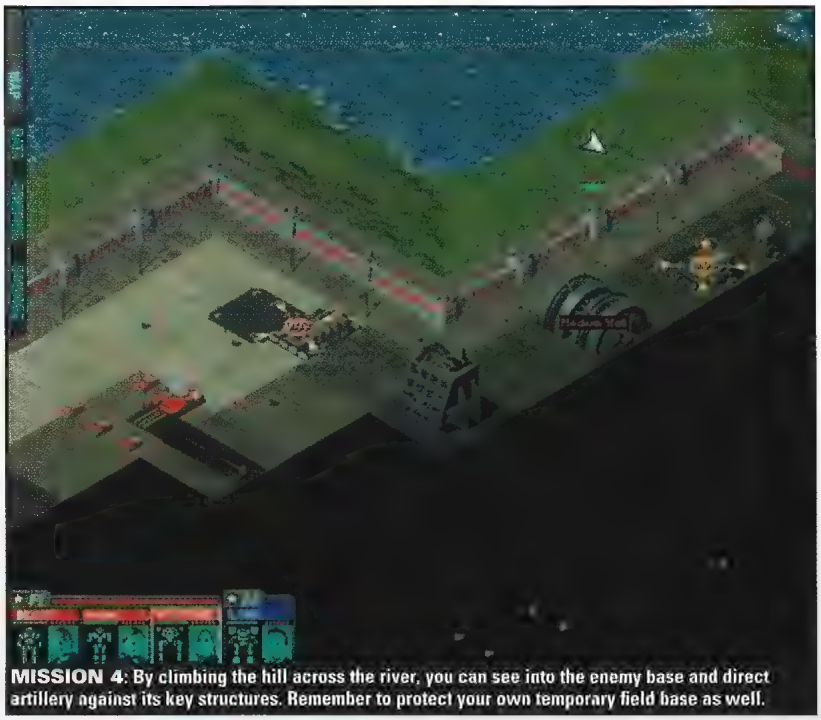
MISSION 3: The *Raven* is waiting for your rescue. Its ECM suite will be valuable in upcoming missions.

Head east to the river and follow it southeast. At the intersection of the highway and a dirt road, follow the dirt road but stay south of it as far as you can (basically, along the north edge of the forest). If you are too far north you may be spotted on the sensors of some Commandos, but the ECM gear in the Raven should blind them. Once the forest edge turns south, follow it but remain west of the dirt road. When you reach the water, follow the eastern edge of the water south, hugging the coastline.

Advance slowly as you encounter a series of field bases guarded by turrets. Once past the bases, follow the highway southwest.

As you continue southwest you'll notice a sensor trace to the south. This is a Smoke Jaguar Mad Cat Heavy OmniMech that can handily kick your ass. It is recommended that you continue parallel to the road on the west side. The Raven's ECM suite should keep the Mad Cat blind, unless you are too far east. Watch the Mad Cat's sensor circle — if it shrinks, it's coming for you. If it does, drop an artillery strike on the fuel tanks near the bridge that is has to cross to get to you. That'll probably kill it, but you may need to finish it off. If the madness sets in and you choose to fight it, stay in close to it as best you can, and good frickin' luck!

Continue on the highway, and destroy the lone hover tank that opposes you. Reach the extraction point in order to end the mission.



MISSION 4: By climbing the hill across the river, you can see into the enemy base and direct artillery against its key structures. Remember to protect your own temporary field base as well.

OP1 – Mission 4

MISSION: A small Clan outpost has been targeted for destruction. Trash it while protecting your own temporary field base.
LOADOUT: If don't have a Centurion or some other medium Mech, pick one up from Battalion Inventory. If you managed to salvage the Mad Cat from the last mission, give yourself a kiss.
BATTLEPLAN: The enemy will be coming for your field base, so immediately begin ranging north and west. Destroy the Saracen hover tank lurking nearby. Once that's done, head east until you hit a highway heading southwest-to-northeast. Find the town along it and head southeast from there. Watch your sensors and stay north of the enemy Uller that shows up there first. You'll quickly reach a hill. Climb it. From the top, your forces will be able to see into a portion of the enemy base you have to attack. Use your artillery to destroy the Power Generator and the Vehicle

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MISSION 5: Mine this to stop some attacking Saracens. Assign the minelayer to Force Group 4.

Barrack you can see. (Destroying the Barrack kills the crews of the vehicles parked around it.) Immediately head north and intercept a group of Saracens that, if left alone, will eventually reach your field base.

Once the Saracens are destroyed, head southwest of the hill. There is an Uller guarding a bridge that you have to cross. Kill it. As you cross you may encounter a number of armored cars. Kill them too.

Since you've destroyed the Power Generator, the turrets around the base are disabled. Attack the base using your Mechs that have LRMs to hit the Strikers and other tanks in the base, and your other Mechs to blow the gate. Don't blow the fuel tanks because doing so destroys some crates containing salvage that you can capture. Another Uller will approach at some point. Kill it. Once you are in the base, capture the crates to gain their salvage and then destroy the Administration Building. You can now withdraw back to your field base and the extraction point. You may encounter a Striker and an J. Edgar on the way back, but they shouldn't be much of a threat.

OP1 – Mission 5

MISSION: The Jaguars have learned the location of an allied resistance cell. You must protect the two farms that are hiding them.
LOADOUT: Bring a minelayer and as much long-range firepower as you can. Speed is not that important.
BATTLEPLAN: Place one fast Mech in Force Group 3, the bulk of your units in Force Group 1, and the minelayer and whatever else is left in Force Group 2. Immediately send the Mech in Force Group 1 to the north. Follow that road until it reaches the rail line. Cross the tracks and head east-southeast to the western most farm. This will reveal a large stretch of area and allow you to see various Mechs long before they reach you. If you can, use your artillery to destroy them as they approach.

If the minelayer isn't in its own Force Group, assign it to Force Group 4. Immediately order it to lay mines south along the road it's on. (This will take care of some tanks that arrive late in the mission.) Once the forest to the northwest ends, stop laying mines and head for the road through the trees southwest of the nearby farm. Move the minelayer at full-power down the road and just past the point where it intersects with another road. Turn the minelayer around and lay mines all the way back up the road until halfway from the forest edge to the farm. This should take care of some Saracens that soon attack down this road. Send the minelayer to the western farm.

Send Force Group 1 to the western farm, but leave one light Mech behind to protect the eastern farm in case a Saracen gets through. Once you've destroyed the Saracens, send this Mech to the western arm also.

With the minelayer, begin mining the ground south of the farm and west of the field. Mine as much as you can before the enemy begins to approach that way. Move the minelayer away at full power and bring it northwest of the farm and across the field. They enemy will try and get to the barns, so destroy them as quickly as you can.

Once the first wave is dead, use the minelayer to mine the path through the forest at the far northwest side of the fields. Mine a short distance on the far side of the path, favoring the north, and then mine at a diagonal halfway back to the farm. Once that is done, head immediately north to the northeast edge of the field and begin mining that path to intercept the LRM carriers that will approach that way.

At this point, it's a free-for-all. Hopefully, many enemy units will be destroyed by the mines. You will have to destroy the remainder directly. Use artillery if necessary. And remember, they will destroy the barns if given a chance. Once all of the attacking enemy has been destroyed, the mission ends.

OP1 – Mission 6

MISSION: The Jaguars control a fortified position in the Kaio Industrial Zone that must be cleared out before your forces can advance.
LOADOUT: You can win this mission with heavy, powerful Mechs with medium and long-range either weapons, or lighter, faster Mechs that can cover ground quickly.
BATTLEPLAN: Do not go straight up the middle. Instead, head west from the drop site and move north along the coastline. Make your way through the wall of the base and blast your way in. You'll tangle with a number of smaller vehicles, SRM Carriers and J. Edgar light tanks. Advancing, six Firestarters will close to attack.

Here's some tactics for dealing with an attacking group like the Firestarters: Concentrate all firepower on one Mech at a time. If it is knocked down, change targets. If its Status Bar gets reduced to a few red pixels, change targets. Once the threat has been removed from as many of the enemy Mechs as possible, start finishing them off. Or, concentrate fire until dead. Your choice.

The Firestarters will withdraw toward a Catapult that is coordinating the defense. Let them go and head northwest instead. There are a number of warehouses there containing valuable salvage. Once you have captured them, move toward the Catapult. Engage it with long-range weapons at first, and then rush it as quickly as possible to neutralize its weapons. Once the Catapult is destroyed the mission ends.

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MISSION 6: This guy thinks that he's "King of the Hill," but if you rush him, his Long Range Missiles are useless.

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NEW! Load your Rangers with your choice of weapons

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Ranger Team Bravo

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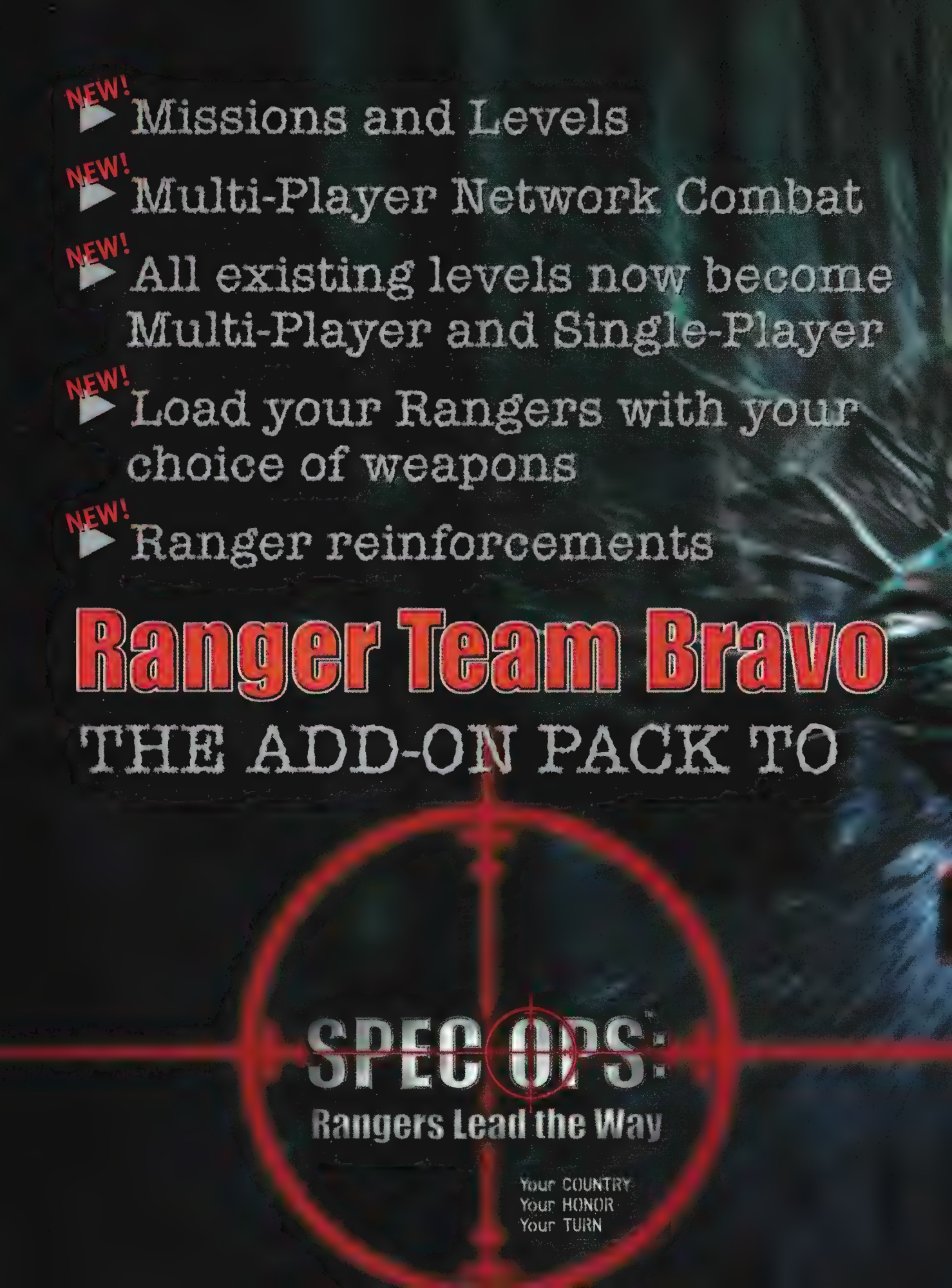

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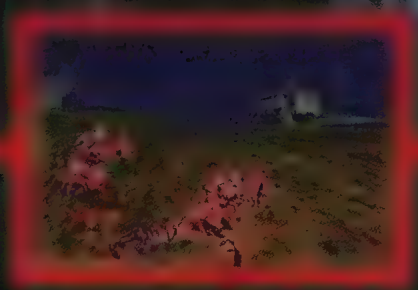

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Readers' Requests

The best hints and tips that money can buy!

After last month's cheat code extravaganza, The Tip of the Month prize package returns in all of its glory. If you're a fan of role-playing games, you owe it to yourself to give *Final Fantasy VII* a try. It's unlike any RPG you've ever seen on the PC, and the deep story and characters will keep you going to the end. To help you in your travels, one of our readers has supplied some handy tips for acquiring enemy skills. We also have even more cheat codes for the ne'er-do-wells among you.

Final Fantasy VII

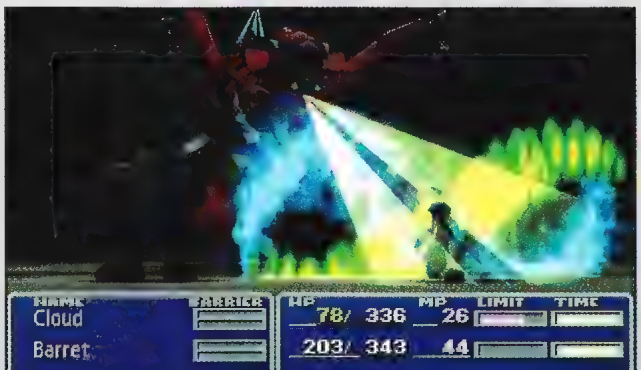
READER'S TIP WINNER OF THE MONTH

To help welcome *Final Fantasy VII* to the PC universe, I have a handful of hints to help you get started:

- Try and steal from everyone you can. There are a number of creatures throughout the game that carry items that you won't be able to get for a long while.
- Save constantly! There's nothing worse than completing a tough part of the game only to have to replay it because you forgot to save and then ran into problems later.
- Pay attention to your surroundings. Look for glimmers and out of place colors. Usually these point out treasure chests or Materia.
- To get Aeris' ultimate limit, Great Gospel, you must first return to Junon with the buggy. Cross the river near the mountains and enter the cave on the other side. The old man will give you a gift any time the last two numbers in the number of fights you have fought match up. The first time you visit him, he will give you a bolt ring. The second time he'll give you Mythril. Return to the second continent and go to the isolated house across from Gold Saucer Desert. Give the man inside some Mythril (he will only be there after you get the Tiny Bronco). Open the small chest upstairs. Inside is the Great Gospel. Note: You can only do this before the Temple of the Ancients. Make sure to get all of Aeris' normal limits and then use this on her.

Here's a good listing of every enemy skill in the game and the easiest way to get it:

- Matra Magic – Midgar area, Custom Sweeper. They shouldn't hesitate to cast it on you.
- L4 Suicide – Chocobo Ranch area, Muu. Wait for them to cast it on you, but be careful that no one in your party has a level that's a multiple of four.
- Chocobuckle – Chocobo Ranch area, Chocobo. This has one of the weirdest effects and is a very difficult one to get. You need to find a L16 Chocobo (they ride with birds and elephants only). When you find one, feed it three Curiel Greens (which are the most expensive ones you can buy at the ranch), then cast L4 Suicide. The chocobo will be happy to give it to you.
- Flame Thrower – Mythril Cave. Run around until a dragonfly-like monster begins to attack you. Wait until it casts the spell on the person holding your Enemy Skill.
- Laser – Gold Saucer prison. In the junkyard, run around until you fight a spider-like creature. Manipulate it and have it cast Laser on the person with the Materia. You can also get this from the Dark Dragon in the final dungeon.
- Aqualung – Gold Saucer area, Chimera. Ride the buggy around the inside of Gold Saucer desert. When you fight a Chimera, manipulate it and have it cast Aqualung on your party. Be warned though; this spell is extremely powerful and can devastate your party if you are not over L20. If you have trouble getting the skill this way, you'll have to wait and get it from the Serpents on the crashed Gelnika.
- White Wind – Fort Condor area, Zemelzett. Get the buggy from the Gold Saucer. Take it into Costa Del Sol and stowaway on the boat. When you get back to Junon, leave the city and run around Fort Condor until you find the Zemelzett. Manipulate it and cast White Wind on your party.
- Frog Song – Gongaga area, Touch Me. Run around the forest until you find one. They will cast it if only one person is not a frog. You can set this up using Maiden's Kisses. Higher level characters can manipulate them.
- Big Guard – Gongaga area, Beachplug. Run around a beach coast until you find one. Manipulate it and have it cast Big Guard on your party.
- Death Sentence – Cosmo Canyon. When you are in the Gi Caves, there are a number of creatures that will use this spell. This is the only place you can get this spell and you will only be at this location once.
- ???? – Nibelheim, Jersey. This creature lives on the right hand side of the



In order to gain some of the abilities you need to be successful in *Final Fantasy VII*, you'll have to subject yourself to enemy attacks.

Cheater's Corner

Grand Theft Auto

At the Player Select screen, enter the codes you want to use as the player name. Multiple codes can be entered and when you're done, just enter the name you want to use in the game. You may need to quit out of the game and re-start it to activate the codes.

NINEINAROW	Access to all levels and cities
IAMTHELAW	No police
ITCOULDBEYOU	Gives you 999999999 points
SUCKMY ROCKET	Starts you off with all weapons and powerups
ITSTANTRUM	Gives you unlimited lives
HATEMACHINE	Multiplier raised to 10
BUCKFAST	Press the * key on the number pad to get all weapons
HEARTOFGOLD	View all cut-scenes

SPECIAL ADULTS-ONLY CHEAT!

This one is only for mommies and daddies who love each other very much. If the foul language of *GTA* isn't enough for you, you can activate a mode with super-XXX-rated dialog! Use the following codes *if you dare:*

IAMGARYPENN	Enables extra-offensive language mode
IAMNOTGARY PENN	Disables extra-offensive language mode

Shinra Mansion. Run around until you fight them, then wait until they cast it on the person carrying the Enemy Skill. If you are of a high enough level, you will be able to manipulate them.

- Trine – Mt. Nibel, Materia Keeper. This boss almost always casts this spell once during the battle. You can also get it from Yuffie's dad when you climb the pagoda. If this does not work, you can get it from the Stirvas that run around inside the Gaea Cliffs.
- Death Force – Wutai area, Adamantaimai. Run around the beach until you find one. Manipulate it and have it cast Death Force on the person with the Materia.
- Magic Hammer – Wutai area. Run around the grassy areas until you find a grass creature. Manipulate it and have it cast Magic Hammer on the person with the Materia. This spell will remove 100 of your spell points, so try to be careful.
- Magic Breath – Gaea Cliffs, Stirva. Run around the inside of the Gaea Cliffs until you find one. Manipulate it and have it cast Magic Breath on your party. This spell does heavy damage so make sure to heal yourself quickly.
- Bad Breath – Gaea Cliffs, Marlboro. Found outside the Gaea Cliffs. Wait until it casts it on you or, if you're powerful enough, manipulate it. You can also fight it in the Final Dungeon.
- Beta – Chocobo Ranch area, Midgar Zolom. Once you have the airship, land near the swamp and then run in. The Zolom should find you quickly. He won't be manipulated and only casts it when it's critical. To achieve this state, have someone (not the person with the Materia) cast Demi 3 continually. Eventually, this character will get knocked off-screen, and the Zolom will cast Beta on the remaining two.
- Goblin Punch – Goblin Island, Goblin. On the northeast part of the map there is a thin chain of islands. Land your airship on the biggest one and run around the forest. When you find some goblins wait until one uses it on you or manipulate them.
- L5 Death – Final Dungeon, Parasite. Manipulate a parasite and have it cast L5 Death on the party. Make sure nobody has a level multiple of five.
- Dragon Force – Final Dungeon, Dark Dragon. Manipulate the dragon and have it cast the spell on the character holding the Materia.
- Angel Whisper – Final Dungeon, Pollensalta. Manipulate her and have her cast the spell on the person with the Materia. This is a very useful spell.
- Roulette – Final Dungeon, Death Jester. Cast Death Force on everyone in the party. Manipulate the jester and have it cast Roulette. Repeat until the Roulette lands on the person with the Materia.
- Shadow Flare – Final Dungeon, Zombie Dragon. This is hard to get as well as dangerous. You have to wait until he casts it on the person with the Materia.
- Pandora's Box – Final Dungeon, Zombie Dragon. This one is easy to get. Just cast Full Cure on the dragon and his dying move will be Pandora's Box.

—Chris Sutton, *Omaha, NE*

Good work Chris. You are definitely "da man" and for your efforts we are awarding you our Tip of the Month prize package.

PCG

ARE YOU A GAMING GENIUS?

Do you know the secrets to every PC game ever made? Want to share your love of gaming with the world? Then Strategy Central wants you for The Tip of the Month Club.

Every month we'll select a letter that gives the best advice or puzzle solution to a current game, and the lucky winner will receive a slew of prizes, including a *PC Gamer* T-shirt, a free strategy guide to inspire you, and a PC game pulled randomly from our mysterious and sinister Box O' Prizes. Send letters to:

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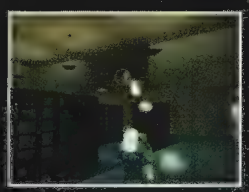

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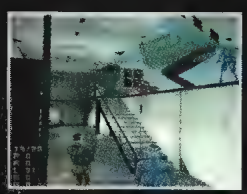

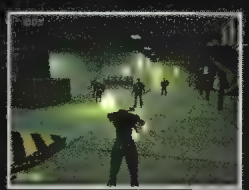

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LETTERS

Apparently, the word for our October issue is "mama." If you can find the four other places it appears in this month's letters section, well — you probably ought to find yourself a life. In the meantime, write us a letter! We like getting mail from all kinds of folks, so whether you are a mama, need a mama, or even are a mama's boy, we want to hear what you've got to say.

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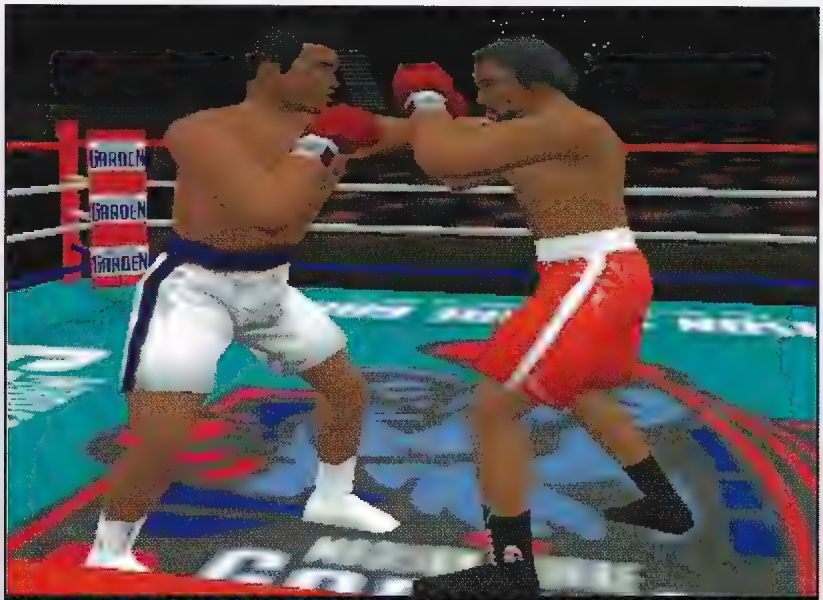

We knew we weren't alone in lamenting the rumored absence of Joe Frazier from EA Sports' upcoming *Knockout Kings*. There's still a chance he'll be included — but apparently George Foreman is right out, which is just as disappointing.

Weasels, Weenies, and Hamsters

Kudos to you, *PC Gamer*, for your honesty, for pulling no punches in your reviews, for being brutally frank. Now allow me to play Devil's Advocate and disagree with Lance Lindley who, in a recent letter to you, maintains that online gaming is dominated by "assholes." It's simply not true. Get online and check it out. What do you see? I see online gaming worlds that are dominated by weasels, weenies, and hamsters. They try to follow the rules, try to do heroic deeds, try to develop into noble leaders, try to save the world. It's repulsive and mindless. It's pathetic. It's pure peckerwood. It makes gamers like me, the real warriors, want to puke, to make them eat fiery death. We know these miserable munchkins deserve to die.

We all pretend to shake our heads at the guy who smoked Lord British, but deep down inside — way deep down inside — we admire him; we admire his daring, his courage, his ruthlessness. This guy doesn't get online after helping his mama make cookies. He doesn't attract an entourage of kumquats to talk about their Barbies and Kens.

The bottom line is, when you go online, you don't go to suck on a candy cane. If you do, you will pay. You will kiss my rocket launcher. In short, you will die, maggots. It's as close to glory as you'll ever come.

— Dan Gallagher, *via the Internet*

You heard it, people! Dan Gallagher is a real warrior! This guy's so mean he won't even help his mama bake cookies! And he's clearly off his medication! So watch out!

Coconut Worship

I am very disappointed with what you did to Coconut Monkey a few issues ago. How could you do such a thing? You destroyed his island paradise and put his life in jeopardy! Who made up the idea of Pierre, anyway? If I ever find him, I will take his face and make a punching bag out of it! Poor Coconut Monkey has never done anything wrong, and Pierre is just being a jerk. I'm just very mad and would have cried if he did die. Thousands would commit suicide if this happened; they would tear down the Statue of Liberty and make a monument of Coconut Monkey in New York instead. You just better be careful of what you do with Coconut Monkey.

— Andrew Pember, *via the Internet*

Andrew Pember, meet Dan Gallagher.

Say it Ain't So, Smokin' Joe

I just read the "Knockout Kings" preview in the August issue of *PC Gamer*, and I'd like to say how impressed I am. I am a big fan of Smokin' Joe Frazier, and it does my heart good to see that someone thinks his absence from a list of boxing greats is conspicuous. Casual boxing fans only remember Frazier as an opponent to Muhammad Ali. Few remember that it was Smokin' Joe that thumped Ali in "The Fight of the Century" on March 8, 1971. Anyone that could put a hurt like that on Ali deserves to be in the game.

— Joe Shippert, *via the Internet*

Ear Candy

I don't think the music in PC games is taken seriously enough. The music gets the player's blood moving and gets him energized while at the same time entertaining him. *MechWarrior 2*, although it came out a long time ago, still entertains me because the audio tracks are incredible. I find myself popping my *MechWarrior 2* CD into my stereo while I am playing other games like *Uprising* and *Unreal*. I found *Unreal*'s graphics amazing, but the music was of such a low quality that it brought the game's overall fun-factor down.

Another good example is *Red Alert*. While the game was already fun, the music was awesome, especially the "Hell March" track. Maybe game developers will think about putting a good music lineup on their CDs like they used to.

— Scott Hellmuth, *via the Internet*

I am sick and tired of the music that some games have.... I don't have all the games out there but I can say that a big portion of the games have damn stupid techno stuff in there. I'm sure it's not the programmers that have bad taste in music, but the problem is somewhere else in the making of games. I'm sure all of you still have the *StarCraft* manual, so take it out and look at the credits section on the last page. They thank good bands like Strung Out and Guttermouth. They even thank Lucky the Donkey (a character in a Guttermouth song)! Now, I don't know if I'm asking too much, but I would love to hear some punk rock in a PC game — not too much to drive all the mama's boys away, but maybe a short sequence in an adrenaline pumping sequence somewhere in a game. Blizzard, gimme some good music!

— Aaron Tessier, *via the Internet*

Another Camper Heard From

What is your problem with campers; they're not invincible superhumans that can't be killed. Just because they sit at one respawn point doesn't mean you die the instant you appear — you have a chance to move when they shoot at you. Obviously, you aren't quick enough on your keyboard to move away. Since I am telling you this, you'll probably insult me to no end in your magazine, but I don't really care.

— David Herrmann, *via the Internet*

Well, okay, then: You're ugly, and your mama dresses you funny.

More Spiders!

I am responding to a recent letter sent in informing you of a spider attack while carrying a *PC Gamer*. I would like to testify to the fact that the writer was not lying. When I bought my August *PCG*, three spiders started to attack me. Having a 240+ page magazine in my hand helped in dispatching them quickly, but I was downtown and created quite a scene when I begin smacking the counter of the local newsstand. Is this some sort of sick, sadistic practice?

— J. Walls, *via the Internet*

Thanks for your letter, Mr. Walls. The fact that you received three spiders in your August issue explains why a couple of other readers didn't get any spider at all. You should consider yourself lucky. Please feel free to keep the two surplus spiders as a gift from PC Gamer. *And don't say we never gave you anything.*

Why was *Deer Hunter* — a mediocre game by any standard — such a big success? The finest minds in computer gaming (as well as ours and James Helferty's) are still at work on this one.

Hunting for Explanations

Just a thought about Mr. McDonald's recent column about the popularity of games like *Deer Hunter* (Extended Play, August 1998). Perhaps the reason the newer gamers are so eager to buy these simplistic games is that they don't have the time to invest in some of the more complex and immersive games. I know how hard it is to get the free time to start back into a quest you know will take a couple hours to finish. People in the 1990s seem to be all stressed out, have no time, etc. Perhaps buying a simple game like *Deer Hunter* allows them more flexibility, time-wise, than some of the other, more complex games.

And then there's the newbies.... It's not that confusing once you think about it; they want something to introduce them to PC gaming: They'll buy *Deer Hunter*, learn how to install a game for themselves, learn about setup configuration, learn about how to use the keyboard for gaming...and all in a neat little package at a nice low price.

Then, when they've mastered all that and realized that the game is crap, they'll go out and buy a copy of *Quake II* or *Unreal*.

— James Helferty, *via the Internet*

That's an interesting theory, James, and one we've seen applied to Myst *as well as* Deer Hunter. *But we prefer another, simpler explanation for these games' successes: People are sheep. Except, of course, for the intelligent and discerning readers of* PC Gamer.

PCG

READERS RESPOND TO:

Are you tired of game sequels?

The sequel of a game is gonna be the same basic game as the original. The only time to buy a sequel is when the sequel is very different from the original, which hardly ever happens.

—James Rowan, *via the Internet*

I support sequels when they are well thought out, well planned, and have a definite purpose to exist. I do not, however, support sequels for the sake of sequels, a trend that is too common in movies and is spreading to games as well. For instance; the Ultima series is full of well-made games that deserve the popularity they have. The same is true for the Might and Magic and Heroes of Might and Magic series. Sequels should be reserved for carrying on plot points, favorite characters, or important events, not just as a marketing ploy.

—Bryan Hallick, *via the Internet*

Do I like sequels? You bet! If a company wants to give more of the same gaming goodness of an original game that I liked, what's wrong with that?

— Melanie Simpson, *via the Internet*

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3dfx Interactive	VooDoo 2	138	025
989 Studios	NFL GameDay 99	66-67	735
989 Studios	CyberStrike	144-145	744
Access Software	Links Extreme	88	017
Access Software	Links LS '99 Edition	143	018
Accolade	Test Drive 5	36-37	026
Action Software, Inc.	Marketplace	356	009
Activision	Heretic II	IFC	020
Activision	Civ 3	34-35	028
Activision	Heavy Gear 2	132-133	022
Activision	Fighter Squadron	160-161	027
Advent	Advent Speakers	280-281	349
AlienWare PC Systems	Systems	272	008
American ANKO	Joystick	264	016
Amn. Inst. for Comp. Science	Recruitment	355	•••
Art Institute International	Recruitment	354	167
ASC Games	TNN Outdoors Hunter	12	029
ASC Games	Sanitarium	104-105	024
ATI Technologies	Graphics Board	250	013
Aureal Semiconductor	A3D	225	015
Bethesda Softworks	Red Guard	103	044
Blaze Technologies	Blaze	334	041
Boston Acoustics Inc.	Personal Desktop Audio	91	045
BSG Laboratories	Survival Guide	270-271	043
Bungie Software	Myth II	80-81	046
Canopus Corporation	Pure 3D 2	77	093
Columbia House	CD ROM	267	•••
Compu Experts	Marketplace	356	116
Creative Labs Inc.	Graphics Product	OBC	108
Creative Labs Inc.	Sound Blaster Live	211-214	117
CyberWarrior, Inc.	Rubies of Eventide	128	118
Diamond Multimedia	Monster Fusion	134-135	122
Dreamworks Interactive	Trespasser	162-163	•••
Earthlink Network	Earthlink ISP	209	179
eBay	A.O.R.	116	180
Eidos Interactive	Tomb Raider 3	18-19	181
Eidos Interactive	Eidos	149	174
Eidos Interactive	Commandos	150-151	170
Eidos Interactive	Final Fantasy VII	196-197	163
Eidos Interactive	Gangsters	226-227	190
Electronic Arts	Madden '99	32-33	182
Electronic Arts	Tiger Woods '99	136-137	183
Electronic Arts	Moto Racer 2	262-263	184
Electronic Arts	Need for Speed III	292-293	185
Electronics Boutique	Catalogue	119-124	169
Electronics Boutique	EB On Line	190	188
Empire Interactive	Airborne 101	111	189
Eplay	Systems	269	609
Falcon Northwest	Mach V	299	204
GameStorm	GameStorm	131	244
Gravis	Xterminator	254-255	254
GT Interactive	Blood 2	4-5	255
GT Interactive	Load Runner	51	261
GT Interactive	War of the Worlds	74-75	259
GT Interactive	Abe's Exodus	154-155	263
GT Interactive	KKND2	188-189	262
GT Interactive	Unreal	282-283	258
GT Interactive	Total Annihilation Kingdoms	319, 321, 323, 325, 327	248
Incredible Technologies	Golden Tee Golf	112	322
Infogrames	Independence War	100	354
Infogrames	Total Airwar	297	355
Intel Corporation	Software for PC's	29	***
Intense Ent. Interactive	Grand Prix World Champions	156	358
Interact Accessories	Game Shark for Windows	328-329	353
Interactive Magic	Family Ad	164-165	359
Interactive Magic	Spearhead	330-331	346
Intergraph	Intense 3D VooDoo	11	361
Interplay Productions, Inc.	Descent III	16-17	360
Interplay Productions, Inc.	VR Baseball '99	21, 253, 307	352
Interplay Productions, Inc.	Heart of Darkness	60-61	351
Interplay Productions, Inc.	Baldur's Gate	108	329
Interplay Productions, Inc.	Fallout 2	200-201	333
LucasArts	Grim Fandango	48a	443
Mad Genius Software	GunMetal	302-303	481
MicroProse	Star Trek: Klingon Honor Guard	93-95	496
Microsoft	Motocross Madness	15	•••
Microsoft	Urban Assault	234-235, 237	•••
Microsoft	Age of Empires	291	•••
Midnight Multimedia	Marketplace	357	487
MindSpring	MindSpring	176	498
Monolith Productions	Shogo	56-57	493
Monolith Productions	Get Medieval	127	494
Monolith Productions	Rage of Mages	180	495
Monsoon	Monsoon	23	499
Origin Systems	WW II Fighters	82-83	187
Patch Products	Kuba / Play This Play That	31	608
Philips USB Peripherals	PC Speakers	261	603
Piranha Interactive	Morpheus	206-207	606
Piranha Interactive	Dead Reckoning	314-315	605
Psygnosis	Global Domination	222-223	607
QuickShot Technology	GenX Series - Joysticks	73	642
R&G Games	Marketplace	357	681
Red Storm Entertainment	Dominant Species - MINDLORD	65	685
Red Storm Entertainment	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	170	682
RedOrb Entertainment	Warlords	174-175	042
RipCord Games	Return Fire	46-47	•••
RipCord Games	Space Bunnies	159	•••
RipCord Games	Enemy Infestation	244-245	•••
RipCord Games	Spec Ops	344-345	•••
SC&T International	Ultimate Per4mer Force Feedback Wheel	115	742
Segasoft	Plane Crazy	68-69	743
Sierra/Dynamix	Red Baron Deluxe	IBC	113
Sierra Studios	Return to Krondor	6-7	112
Sierra/Dynamix	Pro Pilot	52-53	114
Sierra Studios	Caesar III	96-97	111
Sierra/Dynamix	StarSiege/Tribes	183-187	098
Sierra FX	Quest For Glory V	218-219	741
Sierra Studios	Lords of Magic	277-279	740
Sierra Sports	Grand Prix Legends	310-311	090
Sierra Studios	King's Quest: Mask of Eternity	208-209	739
SirTech Canada Limited	Jagged Alliance 2	41	734
SouthPeak Interactive	Dark Side of the Moon	300-301	733
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Sportsline	Sportsline	240	
SSI -Strategic Simulations, Inc.	Chaos Gate	242-234	745
Stargate Software	Marketplace	357	727
The 3DO Company	TOCA Racing	42-43	775
The 3DO Company	Heroes of Might and Magic III	224a	776
THQ Inc.	Red Jack	26	765
THQ Inc.	Brunswick Bowling	173	764
Thrustmaster, Inc.	Frag Master	79	781
Thrustmaster, Inc.	Motorsports	259	782
Tiburon Entertainment	Recruitment	355	769
Virgin Interactive Ent.	Recoil	24-25	841
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Virgin Interactive Ent.	Sports Car	246-247	847
Westwood Studios	Lands of Lore III	84	846
Westwood Studios	Dune 2000	217	844
Westwood Studios	C&C / Tiberian Sun	286-287	842
Wizard Works	Emergency	179	257
Wizard Works	Retaliation	288	256
Wizard Works	Montezuma's Return	338-339	260
Wizards of the Coast	Magic: The Gathering	230-231	848
Yamaha Corporation of America	WaveForce	248	921

NEXT TIME...

Brrrrr. Is it just us, or is it getting chilly in here? Yes, there's definitely a cold snap in the air as we barrel undaunted into our November issue, now just a mere 30 days away. Here's what you'll find inside.

Vol. 5 No. 11 Goes On Sale Oct. 13 Don't Miss It!

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Quake III

ONE YEAR AGO, PC GAMER brought you the first ever screenshots and in-depth information on *Quake II* — and now we're going to do it all over again, with the WORLD EXCLUSIVE first look at the most mysterious, most controversial, most anticipated game of the year: *Quake III: Arena*. PC Gamer is *the only magazine in the world* allowed inside id Software's headquarters for the first look at *Quake III*, and next month we'll have all the screenshots and inside information you could ever wish for. We'd say "don't miss it" but then you've already figured that out, right?

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Unreal Special!

THE PHENOMENAL *Unreal* engine is beginning to crop up everywhere, and next month we've got the definitive guide to all the coolest *Unreal*-engine games on the horizon, including *Daikatana II*, *Klingon Honor Guard*, *X-COM Alliance*, and, of course, *Duke Nukem Forever*!

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Dan looked over the edge of the building. Twenty stories down. The street was deserted — it was the middle of the night and most people were at home, with their loved ones. A gust of wind hit Dan, chilling him to his very core. He looked up.

The man was still standing there. Dan couldn't see any of his features. Just darkness and the glinting silver of the man's gun.

"Jump," the man whispered, his voice barely a whisper. "Now."

"Why are you doing this to me?"

The man cocked the gun and stepped forward. "Jump."

"No, you'll have to shoot me."

"Have it your way." The man raised the gun, centering it on Dan's forehead.

Dan closed his eyes.

TO BE CONTINUED...

PC GAMER

OCTOBER 1998

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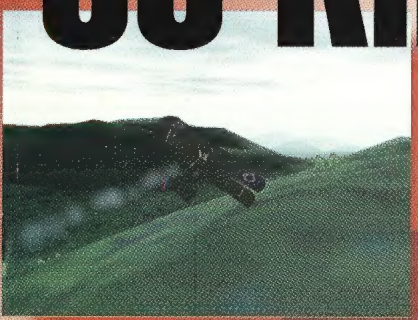

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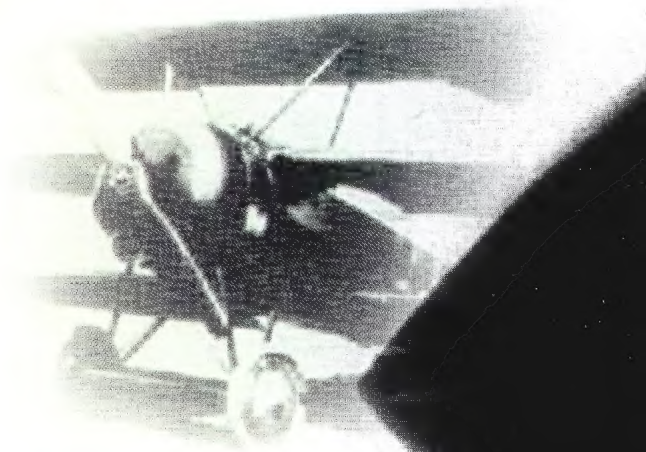

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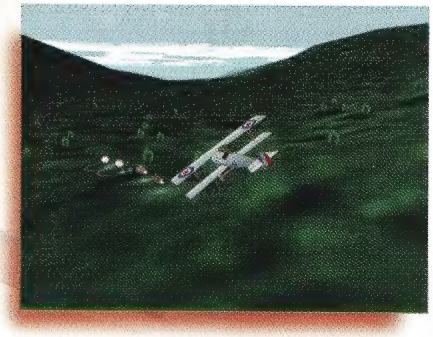

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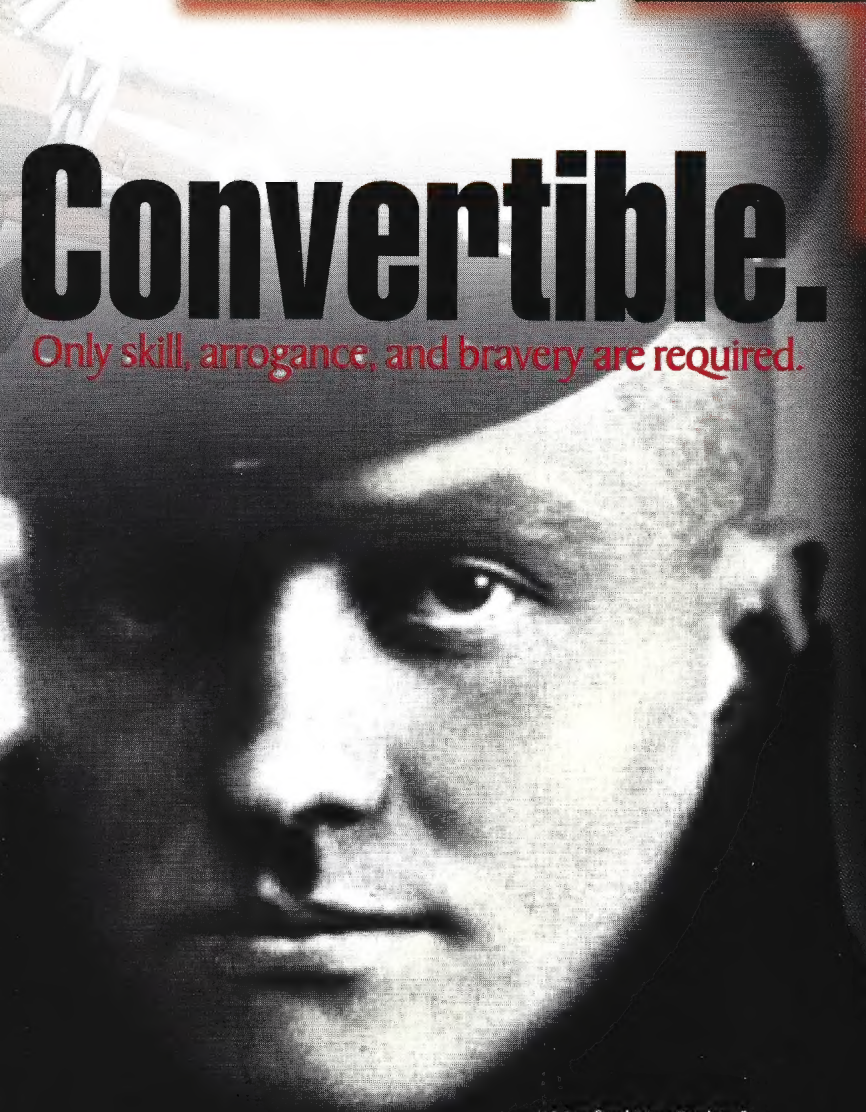

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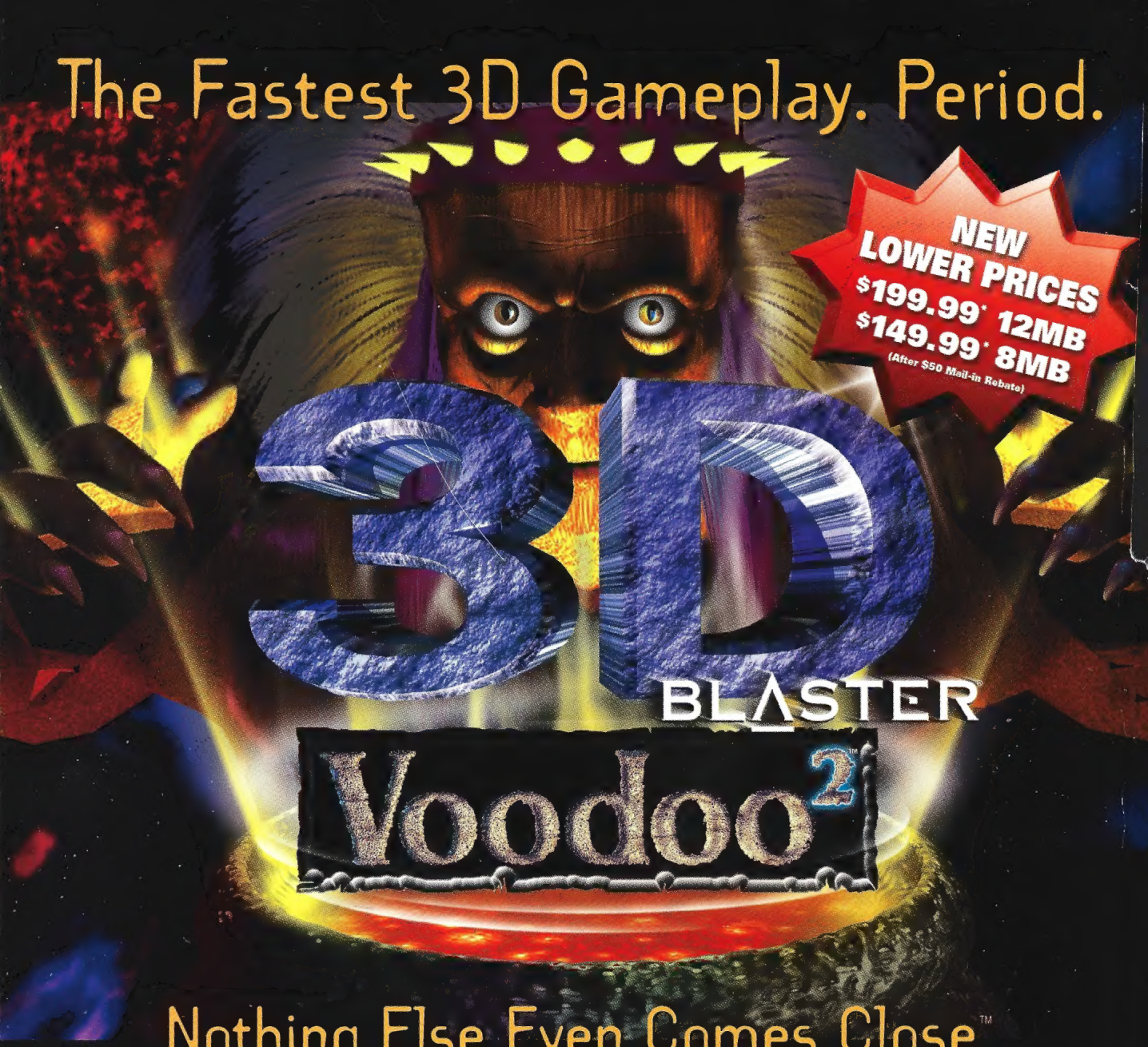

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